

# **A Daughter of Two Worlds**

**LEROY SCOTT**





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# A DAUGHTER OF TWO WORLDS

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*A NOVEL of NEW YORK LIFE*

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By LEROY SCOTT



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OF  
TWO WORLDS

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A NOVEL & NEW YORK LIFE

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A DAUGHTER  
OF TWO WORLDS



# A DAUGHTER OF TWO WORLDS

## CHAPTER I

### THE GARDEN WHERE JENNIE GREW

LIFE'S histories do not begin at some definite point, before which there was nothing, and after which there is everything. Their beginnings reach back through years and generations and through the conditions which have helped twist or nourish or gloriously develop them. But since histories must *start* somewhere, this history of Jennie Malone, and of her strange father Black Jerry, and of the three men who loved her, and of the half-dozen or more other persons who vitally influenced her ambitions and her soul — this history may be started, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, on a certain night early in October in the Pekin Café. For the Pekin had been Jennie's environment since her early childhood; its habitués, many her friends, had all been familiar figures to her; and upon such scenes as this evening's she had peeped almost nightly.

On that October evening, in the little office at the rear of the smoke-fogged, orchestra-inspired café, sat two men, a bottle of imported mineral water between them. One was deep of chest and of powerful width of shoulders, and had a square, grim face, with that stippled duskiness which the closest shaving cannot expunge from dark and heavily bearded skins. It was that swarthy



skin, together with his shining ebon hair (forty had now marked it with a few lines of gray), which, long ago, in this quarter where every one who deviated from the average was tagged with his outstanding characteristic, had caused him to be rechristened "Black Jerry."

The other was as bland and open of manner as Jerry was grim and reticent. He was of indefinite age — sixty might be near the middle of one's guesses. Beneath eyes and jaw were deflated pouches, suggesting bulkier days when an unprotesting stomach had permitted a generous eating of all good things of the earth. His few short gray hairs were parted exactly in the middle; of eyebrows he had none at all, of eyelashes almost none. His gray eyes were genial, bland, shrewd — infinitely wise and sophisticated and resourceful. Among his friends he was known as "Uncle George," though by blood or law he was uncle to none. At present he was out of his habitat; rarely in these, his more mellow years, did he wander below Fourteenth Street, except as now to visit Black Jerry. Some thirty or forty blocks uptown, in the territory where stood the smartest restaurants of Broadway, and the seemingly more proper but really very similar hotels along Fifth Avenue — that was Uncle George's home country.

Just now Jerry's face had relaxed somewhat of its grim control, for Jerry was in the company of a proved and trusted friend. But the relaxation was only partial. The habit of reticence and self-containment was so strong upon Jerry that he could not really let himself go even with such a friend as Uncle George.

"Now, see here, Jerry, what's worrying you?" insisted the older man.

"Nothing worth talking about, Uncle George."

"That's what you said before," returned Uncle George in a dry, drawling voice, but with a keen look at the other from his old eyes. "But, excuse me, Jerry — I may be too wise a guy, and like the top side of the earth's crust too well, to call you a liar — but words to that effect are what some more reckless party, who had no proper regard for his beauty in the place where it last was, might in a thoughtless moment try to say to you. But, Jerry, I'd be publicly insulting my own intelligence if I did n't mildly slip you a hint that that bunk don't go with me. Something's worrying you, and worrying you big — or you would n't look like you do."

Uncle George might at times be cunning, even shifty, but just now all his impulses were kindly. "Come on, Jerry, get it off your chest. Mebbe I can help you out. I saw Casey leave as I came in. Did that plain-clothes copper have anything to do with this smile of yours that won't come on?"

"Casey did try to throw it into me," admitted Black Jerry. "But I did n't let him get away with anything."

"Casey's a pretty square guy — for a copper."

"Oh, Casey's square enough."

"What did he want? — if you don't mind telling me."

"I don't mind telling you about Casey," returned Jerry in his heavy voice that seemed to have its origin in sub-diaphragmal regions. "Casey comes in about a guy named Morrison. Five or six weeks ago this Morrison blows in here, already carrying a lot of booze, with a party of friends. He orders the best eats and drinks in the house; he's short of dough, and asks me to cash a check for fifty. I feel he's safe and I cash it, and it goes through the bank all right. While he's here, being

already stewed he loses his check-book. But it's found and give back before he leaves."

"And that's all you know about it?"

"That's all I knew till Casey shows up to-night. Casey says this Morrison has made a holler about a forged check — not the check he give me, but another check for twenty-five. Morrison did n't discover the forgery until he got his canceled checks from the bank the other day. Casey says he's gone over Morrison's talk and all the evidence. Casey says he's handing it to me straight, and he says there ain't no doubt that the forged check came out of Morrison's pocket check-book; no doubt that it was torn out by some one while his check-book was lost in my place; and Casey says there's no doubt it was forged by copying from the good check which I had in my cash drawer. So Casey tells me straight out that the trick was turned by some one in my place, and he orders me to come across and help him grab the guy that done it."

"Does he think you wrote the check, Jerry?"

"Naw!" with a growl of contempt. "I'm no good with the pen, and Casey knows it! Besides, if I did go into a crooked deal, it would n't be for no such piker's stake as twenty-five!"

"But even if you had nothing to do with it, would n't it be better for you to square the sucker by slipping him back the twenty-five?"

"That's what I offered to Casey." Black Jerry was meditatively silent for a moment. "What I'm wondering about is, who wrote that check?"

"Plenty of clever crooks hang out in your joint, Jerry," suggested Uncle George.

"But which one of them was clever enough to get

hold of that good check to copy from? — that good check being in my cash drawer. That's what's got me guessing, Uncle George. Casey's coming in to see me about it again in an hour."

He was grimly composed again. "It'd be a little thing for anybody else, but it's damned serious for me. With the police watching for a chance to fall on me, I can't afford to have anything crooked happen in my joint."

"It does have a nasty look, Jerry — considering your situation."

For a moment Jerry's gleaming eyes were fixed on the old face of Uncle George. Then he remarked abruptly:

"But that phony check — that's the least of my worries."

"Then what is the matter with you?" exclaimed Uncle George, staring.

But Jerry, as though he had not heard the question, stood up. "Excuse me — guess I'd better have a look at what's doing outside. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Uncle George gazed searchingly at the face of the man who, in an earlier day, had been the theme of acres of reporters' romancing — romances which had resulted in his being still remembered, though somewhat vaguely, as a grisly name that once upon a time had done something (just what was perhaps forgotten) which was brutally tragic. Uncle George, wise old worldling, thought he understood Jerry; believed he knew what ideas, what impulses, what passions existed behind that dark, taciturn surface which was shown the world. But sometimes Uncle George was not at all certain, and he wondered — just as he now sat wondering as Jerry stepped out of the office.



A pair of screens shut off the little office, and also a side door opening on a hallway, from the dining-room, and behind these screens Jerry paused and glanced through. The Pekin was doing good business that night, as in fact it did almost every night. The dining-room was large and low-ceilinged, with rows of iron-topped tables barren of napery, with sawdust-covered floor, with a cleared central area where at this moment a lithe young man in evening clothes and his showily dressed partner were whirling about in a bewildering dance — for this was years ago at about the time the cabaret, and the tango and its coeval dances, were moving uptown to their period of prosperity and popularity. At the tables nearest Black Jerry sat the passengers of a "rubber-neck wagon," captained by a guide who knew everything about the world and who was communicating his information by use of smirking innuendo in order that his charges might likewise know everything and yet not have their refined ears befouled by the direct word. At other iron-topped tables sat men and women — but mostly men — of a different sort; theirs was the air of belonging here; they glanced up casually at these invaders, smiled at each other, and spoke in low voices, and returned to their food and drink. But the cargo of the sight-seeing coach gazed about with all the delicious stirring of horror for which they had been prepared and for which they had come.

The guide had just begun his "spiel," and Jerry, at his back, could but overhear it all. "Well, here you are," the shepherd was saying to his flock in that suppressed and guarded whisper which so heightens the effect of recitals that have to do with horror and naughtiness — "here you are in the joint of Black Jerry Malone —



perhaps the toughest joint of its sort in town. You all know about Black Jerry — his big trial ten years ago — how he barely beat his case — one of the most notorious men in New York. . . . And these people at the other tables, they're mostly crooks of one sort or another — burglars, cracksmen, pickpockets, confidence men, and I won't offend you by telling you what the women are. . . . And Black Jerry has a daughter, pretty and smart — Jennie's her name. Wish I could show her to you; she and her father have an apartment upstairs. If you could see her and Black Jerry together, you'd certainly say, Heavens, what a pair!"

The guide became more serious. Professional experience had taught him that a bit of philosophy, with a touch of sentiment, was always effective with these good people from out of town.

"I'm not one of these here sociology men," he went on, "but did you ever think what must become of all the children of criminals? — children who are born in this sort of surroundings and never know anything else? And there are millions of them! Ever think whether their parents can really care for 'em? — and if so, how? Ever think what such children grow up to be? Something big to think about there, you bet! It's sure got me guessing!"

The sight-seers nodded excitedly; it was indeed something big to think about, and it had them guessing, too. From behind the screens Black Jerry stared keenly, suspiciously, at the guide. The mouthing of that gentleman seemed to Jerry to be uncanny. It was as though the guide had stolen into the secret places of his own heart and mind, places which he had not yet even explored.

Presently he became aware that the hall door just behind him was being gently opened. He stepped quickly to one side, keeping behind the door. There slipped in a slender girl of perhaps sixteen. She peeped cautiously through the door of the office Jerry had just left. Then she peered through the space between the screens and rapidly surveyed the interior of the café. Excitement was flushing her face, and she was reaching out a hand to part the screens, when Jerry whispered sharply:

“Jennie!”

She whirled about. “Dad!”

She was even then pretty, more than pretty — though not as pretty as she was later to be — with dusky skin and dark hair, and eyes of gleaming blackness. Her grace and lightness of figure she certainly could have had only from her mother; but in her rounded face there were hints of qualities that might be derivations from her father.

“What are you doing down here?” demanded Black Jerry.

“Aunt sent me to get two dollars for the washwoman.”

Jerry did not speak his unbelief. He handed her the sum requested, and pointed at the door through which she had entered.

“Tell your aunt, when she wants any money, to wait till I come upstairs — or to come down for it herself. You better remember what I told you: you’re to keep out of here.”

“All right, dad” — and the girl slipped through the door.

Black Jerry gazed after her with narrowed eyes as she mounted the stairway; then he closed the door, and

resumed his survey through the screens. The lithe young man and his showily dressed partner had finished their exhibition number, and couples from the tables were making for the central open space. The lithe young man crossed to the tables where sat the sight-seeing group, and in a manner which was an effective blend of audacity and deference, was inviting a young woman of the party to dance. She drew back, startled, but then was caught by the spirit of adventure, and rose and gave herself to his arms. Jerry's eyes were fixed upon the pair every instant; and when, the dance ended, the young man was bowing his partner into her chair, Jerry, without appearance of having hurried, was instantly through the screen and was slipping a hand through the young man's arm.

"Want a word with you, Slim," he said, and led the other into his little office and closed the door.

"Hello, Uncle George; glad to see you down among us cheap guys," the young man said easily. "I say, Jerry — why the hurry in rushing me in here?"

"I wanted you here before you had a chance to pass it on to some one else," replied Jerry.

"Pass what on?"

"The watch you lifted off that young dame you danced with."

"Why, Jerry, honest to God, I did n't —"

"Shut up!" snapped Jerry. "I seen it all. The ticker's in your left pants pocket right now! Take it out!"

The young fellow's smiling, handsome face became inflamed with sudden passion. "I did n't take any watch — and if I did, who are you to be calling me down for it?" he cried. And then his voice became mocking in its rage. "Black Jerry Malone — it's enough to make

a guy laugh, you to try to call me down for merely lifting a watch. *You!* — when if you'd got what was coming to you, you'd have gone to the chair! And everybody knows it!"

Black Jerry moved one step nearer the other and his powerful shoulders lifted menacingly. "What I done has got nothing to do with this proposition," he growled. "Take that watch out, damn you, or I'll smash that face of yours so far through your head you'll see backward when you walk!"

The young fellow shrunk before the glare of Jerry's eyes, and the passion faded from his face. Slowly he reached into his left trousers pocket and held out a lady's watch.

"Put it back in your pocket," Black Jerry ordered.

Wonderingly the young fellow returned the watch to his pocket.

"You damned cheap crook," Jerry flamed at him — "pulling a stunt like that in my joint! You know there'd be a holler on account of that watch — and you know how much worse I'd get in with the coppers just because it happened in my place. And yet you try to pull it just the same — and me all the time paying you good money to work for me! Damn you!"

Suddenly Black Jerry's right arm shot out and his open palm detonated upon the other's cheek. Though it was only a slap, the other went staggering. But as he was falling, Jerry's left hand caught him and swung him to his feet.

"Shut up!" Jerry ordered, before Slim could open his mouth. "If you've gotta steal, that's your own business. But you've gotta do it away from my joint — remember that!" Jerry was silent a moment, glaring at the other.

Then he spoke sharply. "And the worst thing about you, you stiff, is that you don't have to steal. You're clever enough to get on without stealing. You're a clever performer — I'll hand it to you for that."

He shoved the young fellow toward the door. "You go in there now and put that watch back on that dame!"

"How?"

"If you knew how to take it off I guess you know how to put it back. Dance with her again."

Slim started to slip through the door, but Jerry caught him once more. "Another word, Slim," he said menacingly. "If you want to keep your health, you'd better keep away from my Jennie. Now, go to it!"

Jerry followed the young man out. Again behind the screen Black Jerry watched Slim, with his pleasing manner of audacious politeness, ask the young woman to dance. His keen, practiced eye was on the couple every instant they whirled about the floor; and was on them when Slim bowed her back to her seat.

He was satisfied. Slim had restored the watch.



## CHAPTER II

### BLACK JERRY MALONE

FOR a space Jerry stood gazing in at the motley crowd. His mind, for the moment, was occupied with just one thing — his character and his past with which the angered Slim had just taunted him, and about which that guide yonder had just whispered to his thrilled audience. Automatically the chief events of that past, and some hint of their present significance, passed through Jerry's mind in swift review. . . .

Jerry was a son of the old "Cherry Hill" district, where to fight one's way up and to be cleverer than the other guy were the standards on which one modeled one's manhood. Black Jerry had first attained minor fame as a second-rate middle-weight pugilist — he had put on many a pound since then. Then his strength and his dominating character had made him the leader of the "Ginger Bucks," most notorious of New York gangs for a decade; — and in that position his wits and his control over his pack had made him extremely useful to a class of politicians that (as far as their actual practice is concerned) is now happily going out of vogue. In this period he was charged with participation in such political activities as colonizing, intimidating voters, overtaxing the capacity of ballot-boxes, though nothing was ever definitely proved against him — and in consequence he acquired further notoriety through the newspapers, and the name, "Black Jerry" Malone, came to be regarded by the good people who took an interest in political and social conditions in New York as synony-

mous, in a lesser way, with all that the city held which was evil.

But that had only been the foundation, or the spring-board, of the real notoriety of Black Jerry. Earlier than this he had married a sentimental young school-teacher, who had been fascinated by his personality and the evil tales about him, and who had romanticized herself into believing she could reform him. When Jennie was five years old, the pretty wife was overtaken by romance again. This time the man was one Philip Garrison, handsome and young and of a well-known family — and Jennie's mother, not pausing for a second thought, went adventuring in search of love with him.

Black Jerry, seeking his wife without having spoken his purpose to any one, at length found her in a little Harlem flat, the handsome cavalier with her. When the police arrived, attracted by the uproar, the picture which the sophisticated officers saw explained everything: a crumpled man, his skull injured, an arm broken — a hysterical woman writhing on the floor, bleeding from a bullet wound, yet still able to see all that was happening — and Black Jerry standing between the two holding a revolver that examination showed to contain two empty shells.

The pretty, light-minded wife in her frenzy, having as her first thought only the protection of her name, and not knowing the nature of her wound, made a statement: Jerry had been brutal to her, life with him had been endurable no longer; and in fear of him she had run away and gone into hiding. It had been her intention to secure a divorce, and gain possession of Jennie. This Mr. Garrison, an old friend, was merely calling upon her, to help her with advice, when Jerry had broken in.

Jerry had first shot her with the pistol the police had found him holding, and had then sprung upon Mr. Garrison. That was God's truth, God help her!

And that was the nearest to God's truth she ever told, for she suddenly died within an hour, without ever realizing how serious was her injury, and never knowing that Philip Garrison had died before her from a fractured skull. And within the hour Black Jerry was locked up in the Tombs, charged with a double murder.

And also within the hour the papers were full of the affair, and at irregular intervals they were full of it for months thereafter. It had all the elements of a big popular newspaper story of which the public can never read enough: a pretty woman, refined, of good family, who had suffered unspeakably to try to make an honorable man of her husband — and who at the last, in sheer desperation, had tried to escape back into a better life; and a man, a likable, decent fellow, an old friend, motivated by impulses of chivalry, who had tried to aid a harried woman; and a super-villain, the notorious Black Jerry, who, after shooting down his wife, in his vindictive fury and with his gorilla-like strength, had crunchingly snapped the arm of his wife's protector and had then hurled him against a steam radiator, breaking his head. By the papers Jerry was tried and found guilty that first day.

In the beginning the police, the papers, and the public never doubted this version of the drama, as no fuller investigation was undertaken. Why should it, when the case was so obvious? — when Jerry's part in it was so thoroughly in keeping with what was believed to be his character? Police and press made Jerry the super-

beast, and the police crowed loudly over this example of the prompt work of the Department.

All this time Jerry, in his cell, said nothing in his own behalf. He was reticent by nature, and in his cynical wisdom he knew nothing he might say would be believed — and he also knew that by speaking he would add to the hatred with which he was regarded, a loathing for trying to clear himself by attacking the good names of the dead. Also the first few months during which he was in the Tombs awaiting trial, he was utterly without support. He had had backers and followers in the days of his power, but few friends — Uncle George did not then know him; and so high was the feeling against him that those with influence whom he had served in the past, dared not endanger their position by giving him help.

Presently the police discovered that their original statement, reflecting so gloriously upon the efficiency and watchfulness of the Department, contained certain elements of error; but in those days — at least — it was not the policy of the Police Department voluntarily to confess a fallibility which might detract from its credit. When Jerry's trial was first called, the District Attorney, prompted by the Police Department, asked for a postponement; the Chief of Police feared Jerry might have a defense, and wished time to learn what that defense was and to prepare against it. But at this period Jerry had no plan of defense. It was his intention to accept grimly the jury's verdict and the judge's sentence — and he knew well what verdict and sentence would be.

This reprieve brought Jerry an unexpected chance. The postponement caused a shrewd young criminal

lawyer, looking for an opportunity to build a name, to smell that something was not altogether right. He made a private study of the case; then he saw Jerry, informed Jerry he was innocent, and that he was Jerry's lawyer. After a time Jerry told the lawyer a part of the truth — he never admitted the infidelity of his wife. The young attorney exulted; never had he dreamed of such fortune as having for his first big case so sensational an affair as this was going to prove.

He worked hard and carefully; he believed he had built up a perfect defense — and his confident manner showed it. This confidence was reported to the Chief of Police, and the Chief had learned another thing or two; with the result that the day before Jerry's trial was called the second time, the Chief was in the inner office of the District Attorney. They were good friends, and also "good organization" men, and they spoke to the point.

"Tim," said the Chief, "I'm in a hell of a hole, and so's the Department. You've got to help us out."

"Shoot," said the District Attorney. "What's wrong now?"

"It's that case of Black Jerry Malone. If it comes to trial, I'm due for one awful panning, and so is the Department — and neither of us can stand it."

"Go on," said the District Attorney.

"You know what a noise we made about Black Jerry being guilty, and all the big floral set-pieces we handed ourselves over the footlights because of the good work we'd done?"

"Yes. But what's up?"

"Tim, we can't put that conviction across. And if we try to and don't, you know where we get off with the public."



"Can't convict? Why not?"

"I don't need to tell you how we'd doped out the prosecution — you know that better than I do. All I need say here is that the police have yelled that Jerry is guilty, that he croaked the other guy, shot his wife, and that the gun he used was his own. Now, Jerry's lawyer is going to declare that the gun was the other guy's — and he can prove it, for it's so. His line of defense for Jerry is going to be that Jerry merely went to get his wife. And he's going to claim that the other guy opened fire on Jerry, and that Jerry's wife was accidentally killed by one of the other guy's bullets — and he can claim that Jerry jumped on him in self-defense, and that this Garrison having his head cracked over the radiator was an accident which happened while the two men fought for the gun. And as to who did the shooting, the lawyer can prove that, too, if he's as wise a young bird as I think he is."

"Prove it? How?"

"By having the court order us to produce the coat Jerry wore that day. Honest, Tim, we believed it all happened just the way we gave it out. But when we arrested Jerry, we kept everything he had as material evidence, including his clothes. Naturally we did n't examine his clothes at the time; but when I learned a bit about his defense I had them brought in to me. Well, Tim, the shoulder of his coat is powder-burned, and there's a bullet hole in his sleeve. Jerry did n't even know about the bullet holes, since he was n't touched himself. All that won't listen very good to any jury, Tim."

"But there's his wife's dying statement," said the District Attorney.

"I don't need to tell you, Tim, what a wife's testimony against her husband is worth in court. And that testimony will be worth a darned sight less when the lawyer brings out the fact, as he sure will, that Jerry's wife had run off with this other guy — remember, nobody knows that yet — and makes it plain that she was lying to protect herself and the other guy as well. No, Tim, the Department has pulled an awful bone; to go through with that trial will show us up to the public in a way we can't stand. And it'll be bad for the city to think it's got a bum Police Department. I'm willing to stand for a moderate amount of knocking, but not for what'll fall on me if that case goes through. It's up to you, Tim, to help me out."

The District Attorney meditated. "I'll do all I can, Jack."

The next morning an eager-souled young lawyer, who believed he was about to explode the sensation of the decade, and who saw glittering just before him the upward path to fortune and to fame, arose in the courtroom, and went through with the procedure which is a perfunctory preliminary to all such cases — that is, he moved that the indictment be dismissed. The District Attorney stood up, and with punitive energy spoke about the majesty of the law and the necessity of its strict enforcement, and then wound up by declaring that he believed Black Jerry to be as guilty as hell, but that a close reëxamination of all the evidence in his possession convinced him that the State did not have the proof necessary to secure a conviction, and that therefore, in order to save the court time and the State expense, he wished to support the motion of the counsel for the defense that the indictment be dismissed.

The young lawyer's glittering world came crashing about his head, and he sat blinking and gasping. The judge who had been privately forewarned, quickly acted in accord with this joint request of the defending and the prosecuting attorneys, and dismissed Jerry with the most stern and outraged speech that he had been able to prepare upon such short notice.

And thus Black Jerry returned to the world, in the anomalous position of being a discharged prisoner and yet a prisoner who bore the brand of guilt. And all who had followed this tragi-romance — and every one had — believed in his guilt, and Jerry became an even more sinister figure in the minds of the people.

At that time Black Jerry was not greatly concerned over the fact that he had not been cleared. He did not care what the great world thought about him; and in his own world there was more prestige attached to "beating a case" than to being honestly proved innocent. Perhaps Jerry was in his heart not much better than the public's estimate of him; though he had not gone to kill, yet he was glad that Garrison had "got his." Taking it all in all, Black Jerry was inclined to regard it as an even break, and he never discussed the matter.

All this had happened ten years before. At that time Black Jerry never guessed that this episode might have some bearing upon the lives of himself and Jennie. And even now, as he stood peering through the screens into his café, he did not guess how this episode, and the dark reputation it had helped beget for him, was going to reach out of the past, and keep on reaching out of the past, to affect Jennie's future, and hardly less his own. . . .

Black Jerry stepped back into his office and told Uncle

George that Slim Jackson had returned the watch. "It's one hell of a job to keep the crooks from pulling jobs in my joint!" he went on in his exasperated growl. "It's none of my business how much they steal, and I don't care, if only they'll do their stealing away from the Pekin. But with the name I got, you know what the police would do if just one big holler went out about a job being turned here!"

Uncle George nodded. He regarded Jerry keenly a moment with his wise old eyes; then —

"Is this the thing that's been worrying you so, Jerry?"

"It's worried me — sure." Jerry regarded the other steadily; he was wrestling with a strong impulse. "Uncle George, I'll hand it to you straight," he said abruptly. "That stealing here worries me — sure. That business of the phony check worries me — sure. But they're nothing. What's worrying me is something a damned sight bigger!"

"Yes?" interrogated Uncle George.

"Just heard a limber-jawed guy in there spill some of his dope to the bunch of rubber-necks he was steering round. He did n't know or care what he was saying; he was just spilling words; but he said something. He said what becomes of kids that have crooks for their parents and that live among crooks? He said what chance does such a kid have? Uncle George, that's the big thing that has me worrying!"

"You're thinking about Jennie?" Uncle George inquired softly.

"Yes — Jennie." It was not often that Black Jerry's deeper feelings gained a little freedom, and when they did he was at a loss how to manage them. He still spoke

in his bass growl, but it was a bit unsteady. "Last week Jennie was sixteen. I'd been thinking of her before, sure — but it was her being sixteen that really broke the news to me that Jennie was growing up."

"Yes, she's growing up, Jerry."

Black Jerry flushed with contemptuous anger. "That limber-jawed fool back there was saying, how does a crook feel towards his children. I've been pretty much of a crook in my time, sure —"

"So have I, Jerry — so have I."

"But I guess I think as much of my kid as any other guy!"

"And I guess she thinks as much of you, Jerry, as any kid can think of her dad." Then the wise old man added: "Though, of course, Jerry, you've got to remember that all kids of sixteen think mostly of themselves."

"And I guess I'd do as much for my kid as any other man," Jerry continued. "I've kept her in school — she's now in high school — and I've had her take piano lessons and that sort of junk. I could afford it — for I've made good money here, in spite of everything — and you know I've run a place that's really as straight as any of them swell joints on Broadway or Fifth Avenue. And the money I've spent on Jennie ain't been wasted, either. She may not have some of the manners of uptown kids, but when it comes to knowing what's what, and how to use her bean, I'll back her against any of that uptown bunch!"

Uncle George regarded Black Jerry keenly, then slowly nodded his head. "It's just what I guessed all the time, Jerry: you're as proud as hell of Jennie!"

Jerry flushed defiantly. "I've got a right to be, ain't I? She's my kid, ain't she? And I tell you what"



— doggedly — “she’s going to be somebody some day! You just watch!”

Uncle George nodded. The flush of grim, dogged pride faded from Jerry’s face.

“I guess I’ve always had that idea,” he said gruffly; “but it’s only been lately that I’ve noticed that Jennie is growing up, and that I’ve been wondering about this being the place for her to grow up in. There, I’ve handed it all to you, Uncle George. That’s my big worry — Jennie. I guess you get me.”

“Yes, I get you.”

“Well, what am I going to do about Jennie?”

Uncle George regarded the other meditatively. He was thinking about Jerry’s problem — yes; but old worldling that he was, cynical and kindly, and accustomed in these his later years to meditate philosophically upon the new revelations life unfolded to him — he wondered what the world would think, who remembered Jerry and regarded him as a ruthless man-beast that had escaped justice by a fluke, could the world have glimpsed that part of Jerry which had just been opened to him.

“Well, what am I going to do about Jennie?” Black Jerry repeated.

But before Uncle George could reply, the telephone on the desk began to ring. Jerry took up the receiver.

“Hello . . . Yes, this is Jerry Malone . . . But I thought you were coming back here? . . . Well, since you put it that way, I’ll come over. Yes, I’ll be right over.”

He hung up. “It was Casey, Uncle George — about that bum check. He asked me to come over to Police Headquarters; I would n’t do it for any dick but Casey. Wish you’d come along.”

"All right," agreed Uncle George.

Together the two men left the little office, and passing behind the screens from the other side of which came the sound of music and laughter, they walked through the narrow hallway and out into the street.

## CHAPTER III

### JENNIE

**W**HILE Black Jerry and Uncle George were concluding their talk in Jerry's little office, up in a room of the living apartment above the Pekin, Jennie was refreshing a bed that had been rumpled by restless tossing. This done and the night-light adjusted, she looked down at the worn face on the pillow, then stooped and kissed it.

"Feel any better, Aunt Mary?"

"I think I do, dearie." And then, quaveringly: "I'm an awful nuisance, Jennie; but when this rheumatism —"

"No, you're not, Aunt Mary. You've done plenty of my share of the work when I've been sick, or" — with a mischievous, contrite smile — "when I wanted to get out of it."

The older woman smiled affectionately. "I've always been glad to do it, dearie."

"I don't see how you could, auntie, for I've not always been the sort of person it's easy to be nice to." Just then Jennie was in one of her frankest, most likable moods.

"Yes, you have had your whims and your tempers — but for ten years you've been the same as my own child." Like most sick persons Mary Graham liked to wander through and sentimentalize upon the past. "And that first year — while your father was in jail — I had you all to myself. After what my sister did, I could n't do less than all I could for you."

From the day of the now distant tragedy Mary Graham had known the truth about the brief and ill-fated second romance of her younger sister; and Jennie, since she was ten, had also known the unpublished history of that episode.

"You've been too good to me, auntie. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"I suppose you've put the kitchen in order?"

"Yes."

"And your lessons for to-morrow — you've got them?"

"Yes." Jennie gave a little shrug of contempt. "Those lessons — they're nothing!"

"You're so clever, Jennie!" The older woman reached out and took Jennie's hand, and gazed up into her face admiringly, thoughtfully, for a long moment. "You're so clever — and independent — and ambitious — and — and —"

"And selfish," supplied Jennie.

"Not always," protested her aunt — "but, you know, so sure of yourself, that I wonder what kind of a woman you are going to be. I'm always wondering that, Jennie."

"Whatever I do become," smiled Jennie confidently, "I guess I'll be able to take care of myself."

"Yes, I think you will, Jennie. In some ways you're already more grown up than I am. . . . Don't bother about me any more, dearie. I hope I'll be able to be up to-morrow. Go back into the sitting-room and sing that song again with Harry. Mebbe it'll help me fall asleep."

Jennie kissed her again, and went out, leaving the door open. A well-built young man, perhaps twenty-

two, arose and laid aside a magazine. There was nothing handsome in his face and nothing subtle; but it was frank-eyed and likable, and it instantly gave one the sense that its owner was impulsive and loyal — that he might on occasion be swayed either by dogged determination or by utter recklessness.

"Auntie wants us to sing that duet again, Harry," said Jennie. "Come on."

She sat down at the piano, and together they sang the Barcarolle from the "Tales of Hoffmann." Jennie had a warm mezzo-soprano which had had some training, and he had a fair baritone, and together they gave a very tuneful rendition of Offenbach's sugary, swinging melody. Toward the middle of the love-sighing of the song, Harry slipped a hand upon her shoulder, which she seemed not to notice.

"Let's sing it again, Jennie," he urged when they had finished.

"All right — but more softly this time."

So they sang it again — sang it so softly that the old love song was as gentle as a lullaby. At the end the hand which had still remained on her shoulder, slipped to her waist and Harry, bending down, kissed her. She did not try to evade or oppose this endearment. She was fond of Harry, and this was not his first kiss — not by many kisses.

"Jennie — I have n't yet had a chance to tell you what I came to tell you," he said in a low voice.

"Wait a minute." She rose, unloosing his arm, and crossed and peeped through the open door of the bedroom. The eyes on the pillow were closed, and the steady breathing told her that her aunt had at last fallen asleep. She tiptoed in, arranged the bedclothes, and



for a moment gazed down at the pale, relaxed face of the woman who had tried to guide her, — but whom, as a matter of fact, Jennie had managed almost as she pleased. She bent down and with contrite affection touched her lips to the drawn face; then she put out the night-light, and noiselessly went out, closing the door behind her.

She marched across to Harry, but stopped a safe five feet from him — a straight, slender figure, hands on her hips, her dark head cocked, a teasing, impudent smile on her face. She was a swiftly transformed person from the Jennie who had sighed through “Oh, Night of Love.”

“Well, my son — what’s the sad story?”

“Jennie, you’re a regular little devil!” exclaimed the young fellow, exasperated at the change in her. He had wished for the continuance of the tender mood at the piano.

“Thanks — but no time for compliments now,” she mocked him. “Other clients waiting —”

“Jennie — there are about seven different persons in you!”

“You should be glad, not grouchy, over that,” the mocking voice returned promptly. “When one of the persons wears out, there are still several more left of me. . . . Come on, my son, what is it?”

He looked at her, provoked but helpless. He had learned that he was no match for her in words or in moods.

“Jennie, I’d like to be your father just long enough to spank you!” Then he smiled — an open, boyish smile — and ran a big hand through his tangle of yellowish hair. “Yes, you’re a devil — but I guess I like

devils. Well, first thing I wanted to tell you is, I got a new job and a better job."

Again her mood changed; she was frankly delighted. "I'm awf'ly glad, Harry! What is it?"

"With Harrison and Company — the big contracting firm — in the engineering department. And good pay, Jennie — thirty a week."

"That *is* splendid, Harry! How did you get it?"

"I got it, miss, because they saw I was the best man for the place."

"Of course. But you must have had an introduction or recommendation. Who helped you with that?"

"Sam Conway."

"Sam Conway!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, Sam Conway. He's some sort of silent partner in the firm."

She had become suddenly sober. "That's one part of it that I can't be glad about, Harry."

"Why?"

"You know that whenever Sam Conway helps you or gives you anything, he makes you pay for it — sometime — somehow. And the way he makes you pay when pay-time comes — it's not always the way you'd rather pay."

"There's nothing in this, and never will be, for Sam Conway!" exclaimed Harry. "He just did it because he's my friend."

"You mean you think he's your friend."

"Now, listen here, Jennie!" The young fellow's face had flushed, there was an emphatic ring to his voice. "These stories about Sam Conway are all bunk. Sam's a politician, yes, but the people who think of Sam Conway as a scheming political boss have got Sam all

wrong! Sam is a good fellow! — and he's a good straight friend, who'd do anything for his friends! — and he's certainly done a lot for me! I tell you, Sam's all right!"

"I hope he'll be so in your case, Harry. But — be careful!"

"Sam's all right!" he repeated.

"I've said all I wanted to say. Let's not talk any more about that part of it." She was smiling again.

"Anyhow, Harry, I'm hoping it's going to prove a big thing for you."

"It's going to, you bet!" he declared, still aggressive.

But before her smile all the stiff pugnacity which had been roused in behalf of his friend, softened down and again he was the good-natured young fellow of five minutes before. He put his hands in his pockets, spread his feet a trifle, and regarded her with smiling audacity.

"I guess you can guess the chief reason why I'm glad about this job."

"Because you can buy more red neckties."

"Because I'm in right — I'll be promoted — and I'll be making real money in about two years. And in two years you'll be eighteen and through high school. And when you're eighteen, Miss Jennie Malone, you and I are going to get married."

"Oh, we are, are we — just like that," she returned coolly. "Well, if that's your guess of what I'm guessing, Mr. Harry Edwards, you'd better guess another guess for me."

She was sober now and she looked him straight in the eyes, and she spoke with a finality and cool air of worldly maturity that seemed strangely out of keeping in one of her years. "Don't try to kid yourself that way, Harry. I like you a lot — you're a nice boy — but that

little plan is never going to work out. I have some ideas of my own — and I've told you before that you don't fit into them."

"Oh, I know you have some kind of crazy ideas, you and your father. But listen, Jennie, I'm going to make good, and make good big — for you!"

"I hope you make good, Harry, but you're not going to do it for me."

"For you — oh, yes, I am!" he returned, his chin setting.

"Well, I suppose I can't prevent your keeping on thinking that way — and it's not going to bother me a lot since you date it all two years from now. So let's adjourn this discussion." She glanced at a little clock on top of the piano. "I've got to go downstairs to see dad for a while. You can wait here, if you like." She started, then halted as she caught a look in his face and an instinctive movement of his arms. "Don't try any spooning as I go by you, Harry — I don't feel like it," she warned him. "If you do, something may happen that won't make you very happy."

She passed him, and he made no move. At the door she turned and smiled teasingly.

"You'll really be a very nice boy, Harry, when you grow up — if that ever happens!"

"I'll be grown up to the exact size to fit you in two years!" he retorted.

She laughed, mockingly, and shut the door behind her — and in so doing, she shut Harry instantly and completely out of her mind. Her attention was all now upon quite another matter — one which had been restlessly in the back of her thoughts this hour or so. She stood a moment in the little hall at the top of the stairway,

gathering her wits; then she crept swiftly but quietly down and slipped ever so cautiously through the side door, opening from the hallway, into the café, and sidled warily along behind the screens until she was near the door of her father's office. Inch by inch she leaned forward until her vision swept the whole of the interior. As she saw that the office was empty, the tensity of her figure relaxed.

She crept to the fissure between screens, and gazed into the café. At first she did not see the crowd making merry in their various ways; she had eyes for but one thing, her father. Presently she was convinced that he was not there, and she drew a deep breath of relief.

She now fixed her attention on Slim Jackson, and tried to catch his eye. But to the music of the piano and one violin Slim was again giving an exhibition with his dancing partner. Jennie slipped through the screens and made for the table Slim occupied between numbers.

Her entrance was hailed by a score of voices coming from those persons that the guide of the sight-seeing car had indicated as being crooks, confidence men, and kindred gentry. Jennie greeted them easily: almost since her memory began she had known these men, or such as these. She had listened to their adventures; had heard them talk about the police, and suckers, and the public that pretended to be straight; and she had heard them philosophize about life. But whatever might be their practices elsewhere or with others, they had been careful not to go too far with her. To this extent, Black Jerry's bad name had served her well: it had been a ring of safety about her. Men who loved their own skins were inclined to take no liberties with Jennie that might involve a collision with Jerry's temper and strength.



In some respects Jennie may have lived her life in what uptown moralists, who had learned the world from sitting in their studies, might term hell; in other respects she had been as safe as though bred in a convent.

While standing at a table and chaffing with a gentleman who was reputed to do some business in the wire-tapping way, she was caught from behind and swept out into the dancing space. Instinctively she fell into step even before she saw who this capturing partner was.

"What do you mean, Slim?" she gasped. "You almost scared me to death!"

"That's all right, Jen. Come on, finish this out with me and let's show this bunch how it really ought to be done!"

Not till then did Jennie notice that Slim's professional partner had sat down and that they two were dancing alone. She caught the sudden new interest in the faces of the onlookers. It was in her blood to excite admiration, and instantly, forgetful of caution, she was trying to do her best. She was a natural expert at the then new but now passé tango — light and graceful and quick to follow into every new figure.

"Honest, Jen, I'm not kidding," Slim breathed into her ear — "but it's some relief dancing with you after carrying Daisy around!"

That was great praise, coming from Slim. Slim was a truly remarkable dancer, with a lissome steely grace, and a sense of rhythm in his every muscle — the kind of a partner women dream about. With a flourish and a sweeping bow they finished amid enthusiastic applause. The audience demanded an encore.

"Come on, Jen, let's give 'em a repeat," said Slim.

"I should n't have done that one or stayed here this

long, only I forgot," whispered Jennie. "I've got to talk to you, Slim. Meet me out in the hall as soon as you can break away without making people guess you're following me."

With that she walked rapidly out, smiling and waving her hand at the applauding tables — who were not seeing as much of Black Jerry's daughter as once they did — her black eyes shining with excitement, her dark cheeks high with color. She slipped through the screens and stood waiting in the hallway, keeping a sharp watch for the first appearance of her father.

Presently Slim was beside her. "Gee, it sure seems a long time since I've seen you, Jen!"

"Listen, Slim," she whispered rapidly. "I came down awhile ago to see you, but dad was here and I did n't dare risk it."

"And I guess you were a cagy kid not to risk it," he returned, "for Jerry is certainly sore at me."

"It's not just because dad's sore at you, Slim," she went on rapidly, "but I did n't want him to see us together — and I simply *had* to see you!"

"What's doing, Jen?"

"It's that Morrison check."

He started. "What about that check?"

"I overheard a part of what a plain-clothes man told dad to-night. They've found out about the check and the coppers are on the job. I wanted to slip you word, so you would n't be taken by surprise if anything breaks."

"Do you think anything'll break?"

"No. Dad offered to cover the check with good money."

Slim laughed softly, with relief. "Then why worry, Jen, if the sucker is to be squared?"

"That's not all I came to see you about. It's not very much money, but I'm not going to let dad have to pay it. Slim, you've got to come across with your half of that twenty-five."

"You think an awful lot of your dad!" he evaded.

"You bet I do!" she declared sharply. "I wish you were half what he is, then you'd be a real guy, Slim Jackson!"

"Thanks for the wish, Jen." He tried to speak facetiously. "But if it's all the same to you, I'd rather be who I am than to have his name."

But she was not to be diverted; she was instantly back to the point. "Come across with your share!" she demanded.

"Sorry, Jen — but I'm cleaned out."

"You lie, Slim, and you know that you lie," she returned, very steadily, looking him squarely in the eyes. She held out a hand. "The twelve-fifty, Slim — and quick!"

He hesitated, looking meditatively at the commanding, slender figure which still wore its skirts short of a woman's length. Then he reached into a pocket.

"There you are; I was only kidding you, Jen," he laughed. "Have you got your share?"

"No, but I can get it."

"How'll you fix the thing?"

"I'll slip the money in among dad's cash. He'll square that bad check — and think he's out that much — only he'll not be, and he'll never know the difference. If he ever notices the money I slip back, he'll just think he's made a mistake."

"You're a clever kid, Jen." There was the ring of approval in Slim's voice, but he had really spoken me-

chanically; his keen faculties had already passed on to the consideration of another point. "Of course nothing is going to break in this check business," he said casually — "nothing has ever broken in other checks you and I have put through. But I suppose we ought to think out what we're going to do if something does break."

"Yes."

"I figure it like this, Jennie," he went on plausibly. "If they get anybody, they'll get you first since you wrote the check. Now, if they found out that I'd frisked Morrison for his check-book, tore out a check, had a waiter hand the book back to him, and then gave you the check to fix up — why, they'd soak me good and plenty, me being a man. But if you were just to tell them that you found the check-book on the floor, and then filled the check, copying it from the one your dad had cashed — why, the judge would be easy on you, you being a girl, and being able to say you were a first offender. They're always easy on girls, anyhow. Don't you see you come out of it exactly the same either way? — you come out easy. I don't want to talk like a cheap guy, Jen — and I would n't say a word if it was n't all the same to you. But the first way, they'll soak me hard; the second way, I'm not even in it at all. Since it'll work out exactly the same to you, Jen, would you mind, if you have to say anything at all, to tell it the second way?"

She nodded. "Sure — that'll be all right, Slim. Good-night."

"Wait, Jennie!" He caught her arm. "I say, Jen, there's something I've been waiting a chance to tell you — something big."

"Then tell it quick. I don't dare hang around down here long."

"It's like this, Jen. I'm already too good for this joint. I'm going to be the real thing some day — you just watch me!" His voice had the ring of conviction. Slim's belief in himself was honest, and indeed he had a right to it, for he had ability of its own sort — though even in his bold dream of that moment he did not foresee the high places he was eventually to reach. "Look at Connie Devoe. He started out singing in a joint down here — a joint a damned sight cheaper than this dump — and see what Connie Devoe has done — writing all the big Broadway musical shows. If he could start from down here, and go up, you bet I can, too! Already I've got an opening, and a good one!"

"Congratulations, Slim."

"But listen, Jen. I'm figuring you in this with me."

"Me! How?"

"As dancing partner."

"But you already have Daisy White."

"Daisy — oh, God, that cow! Why, carrying her as a load, I'm hardly up to the level of holding down even this job. She's canned — though she does n't know it yet."

"Why, I thought you and Daisy were to be married."

"Nothing to it, Jen. Oh, there may have been a love scene or two — but just the usual thing, you know. Nothing to it at all, Jennie! Listen, now — get this straight. I've got a good idea for an act — and such a team as we'd make, we'd soon be headliners!"

"I suppose it's also your idea that we'd live together?"

"Sure, Jennie. That follows, don't it? You know



I'm off my bean about you, and I'd sure treat you fine."

Jennie was not in the slightest degree offended; what he had suggested did, in her experience, follow as a matter of course. Though Jennie was but sixteen, she had a sophisticated acquaintance with certain worldly matters that would have made most grandmothers gasp.

"Nothing doing in that living together line for me, Slim," she replied in a matter-of-fact voice. "I've seen too often how it works out for the girl. She thinks it's going fine for a while — then the man drops her. Then the next man drops her. Soon she's on the toboggan — and booze or coke has got her. That's the way it'll likely be with Daisy White — oh, I know how it's been between you and her — no use wasting a lie on me." She shook her head in precocious wisdom. "No, that proposition does n't listen good to me, Slim. If ever I go along with a man, a wedding ring's going along, too, and it's going to be on my hand."

"That's O.K. with me, Jennie. I'll be tickled to marry you. That's settled. But listen, Jen — there's even more to the proposition. Down here the checks we've put over, they've had to be small because we were among small people. But when we get to the top, where there are people with real bank accounts, we'll put across some whales — and do it so clever no one will even guess who's doing the job. I tell you, Jennie, you are sure one born wonder with the pen! Now, how about it? Of course I'll marry you — and we'll go up — way up! What d' you say?"

She smiled at him superciliously — with an immense self-confidence. Her reply came in a drawl.

"I say that I am going up, too — way up. Only, Slim — you and I are not going up together!"

"But I said I'd marry you!" he exclaimed.

"And I'll say now, Slim," she went on in her mocking drawl, "that I would n't marry you if you were twice as big as your biggest dreams."

For a moment he stood stock-still, gazing at her. He really cared for her, and his great plans had not included the possibility of such a rebuff. Then his lean cheeks flushed.

"Damn you!" and he sprang forward and threw his arms around her.

In him was an uprushing desire to avenge her insult by inflicting bodily suffering which would leave no telltale marks as evidence, as blows unfortunately do; he thought of a clever, excruciating twist of the arm with which he was well acquainted. Jennie made no outcry; she was quick enough of wit to know that a call for help would result in her father getting word of this meeting, and she wanted no such outcome. She was quick and strong, and for a few silent moments she fought him to a standstill.

Then his dark mood passed, and he laughed softly. "I'm going to marry you all the same, Jennie. Just now all I want is a kiss."

A kiss was an ordinary matter; she had let Harry Edwards kiss her without thinking much about it other than that she rather liked it. But Slim she continued to fight with the same determined energy. Presently she wrenched her right hand free — it still clutched the money he had given her — and drove her fist into his reaching lips.

He loosened her and fell back at the pain of the un-

expected blow, and swore in a suppressed voice. She ran up the stairway, and then realizing that she was not being pursued, she turned and called down in a taunting whisper:

"That's the gentlest kiss you'll ever get from me, Slim Jackson!"

With his whispered answer there came a soft laugh. "I like you all the better for your pep, Jennie! And just remember — we're going to the top together, you and I!"

He laughed softly again and disappeared into the café. She mounted the stairs to the landing, paused a moment to arrange her dress and hair and to regain an even breath; then casually she opened the door and stepped into the sitting-room where Harry still awaited her.

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## CHAPTER IV

### JENNIE FACES AN ORDEAL

JENNIE closed the door behind her and crossed the room in a manner that was the perfection of the usual. Harry laid aside the magazine he had been reading and stood up.

"You were gone a long time to be talking to a mere father," he grumbled good-naturedly.

"Dad'd gone out, and I waited for him in his office, and even yet he has n't come back." Her next words were spoken as if the idea had just come to her, though she had thought of it while regaining her breath outside the door. "Harry, I need some money, need it now, and I don't like to ask dad for it. I wonder if you could loan it to me?"

"Sure," was the prompt reply. "How much?"

"Twelve dollars and a half."

"Will that be plenty?"

"I don't need a cent more."

He counted the amount and handed it to her. She took it in her left hand, the other hand already holding the like amount she had received from Slim Jackson.

"Thanks, Harry; you're a good boy, and if you don't mind, I wish you would n't say anything about this. I don't want dad to learn I've been borrowing."

"I'll not say a word — of course not."

There was a vase on the piano containing artificial roses. She removed the flowers and into this she slipped the two sums she had collected, then seated herself and once more began playing "Oh, Night of Love."

"Come on, Harry, let's sing some more," she suggested. "Soft, so as we won't wake auntie."

They were still singing when half an hour later, the door from the stairway opened, and Black Jerry entered followed by Uncle George and a solidly built man who carried a derby hat. Black Jerry walked to the piano and glared at Jennie, his dark face fiercely set, his black eyes blazing.

Jennie rose. "What's the matter, dad?"

"Damn you!" Jerry said huskily, and his right arm swung with spasmodic swiftness, and his open palm cracked against Jennie's cheek. She toppled sidewise, her outflung, saving hands striking a wild discord as they came down among the piano keys.

"You big brute, you!" cried Harry, and let drive at him.

But Jerry, seemingly without having looked at him, caught his lunging arm by the wrist, holding him helpless.

Jennie came to her feet and pushed between the two men.

"Keep out of this, Harry!" she ordered. "He's got a right to hit me if he wants to. Dad, what's that for?"

"For that phony Morrison check — that check you forged!"

"Dad — I don't know what you're talking about."

"Lies don't go between you and me, Jennie — get that!" Black Jerry gritted at her. "You tell the truth. You might as well, for Casey here has the goods on you."

Jennie looked sharply at the man from Headquarters, trying to pierce to the knowledge that might lie behind the professional mask of his heavy, non-committal face. But she said nothing.



"Tell her, Casey," Jerry commanded.

"Sorry about this, Jerry," Casey said apologetically — "but you know I gotta go through with anything that's put up to me." He stepped toward Jennie. "I suspected you from the first, though I did n't tell your father so. I'd already learned how clever you were at imitating other folks' handwriting. Well, I got something on your father's cashier, never mind what. I put the screws on him to-night, and he told me he'd seen you, when you thought he was n't about, take the original Morrison check out of the cash register — and then about an hour later he saw you slip it back. And then I have the testimony of the grocery store where you cashed it; the owner says you're the party that shoved the check across. And I have a lot more evidence."

"He's got you — I know it," Jerry growled at her. "And it's going to be a lot easier all around if you come across clean."

She considered the situation rapidly for a moment, gazing from her father to the detective. Then, "All right — I did it," she admitted sullenly.

"Jennie, I'm surprised at you!" put in Uncle George. "The forgery was clever work, all right, but all the rest was pretty rotten, Jennie — pretty rotten." He shook his head sadly. Uncle George, in the days before his retirement, had been an artist; and at this moment his dominant feeling was an artist's impatience with clumsy work.

"How'd you get the check?" demanded Jerry.

She remembered Slim's request and her own promise. "Mr. Morrison was drinking, you know, and he must have dropped his check-book. I tore out a check, and then a waiter gave the book back to him."

"Anybody in the game with you?" inquired Casey.

Again her answer was guided by Slim's request: "No, I did it all alone."

Once more Black Jerry's wrath surged up. And in Jerry's inchoate, inarticulate soul, a sense that a wrong had been done, a law broken, was no element in his wrath. The few who knew Jerry most intimately knew him as a "straight guy"; but for him there was no right or wrong — the sole meaning of this to him was that something had happened which was violently contrary to his interests and his desires for Jennie.

"You damned little fool!" he burst out.

Again he raised his hand. She stepped swiftly back; the angered palm fell to his side, clenching and unclenching.

"Don't be too sore, dad," she argued rapidly. "You're not going to lose anything." She turned and lifted the artificial roses from the jar on the piano, recovered the money, and held it out to her father. "I heard you say you were going to square this case. There's the twenty-five dollars — I have n't spent a cent of it. Take it and square that Mr. Morrison."

He looked at her grimly. "Mr. Morrison won't be squared."

"But I thought —"

"So did I, but I just learned that Morrison don't care about the money. He's sore and wants to prosecute to the limit."

"Then — then —" Jennie stopped, bewildered.

Casey moved to her side. "Sorry, but I guess you'll have to come along with me."

"You mean — I'm pinched?"

"Yes. Better put on your hat and coat. We'll be

going right over to the Women's Night Court. We got a taxi waiting below. I don't want to make a scene if I can help it."

She hesitated, still bewildered by the turn events had taken. Her glances shifted about the four men, then rested on Harry. The young man was staring at her, with loose jaw, taken aback by the revelation of her forgery, and by the manner in which a little earlier she had secured a loan from him, and by her easy prevarication concerning that money.

Jennie turned and went into her bedroom, and presently she reëntered dressed to leave; and in another minute she and her father and Uncle George and Casey were out upon the sidewalk — a cold rain was misting drearily down — and Casey was pressing her before them into the taxicab. She was thoroughly frightened. Suspense and vivid apprehensions shot her wildly through. What was about to happen? Courts — prisons! What would the judge do to her?

But frightened as she was, even so her self-confidence did not all desert her. She sat up very rigid in her corner, and listened to the talk of the men as the car jolted over granite-paved streets. She learned that Uncle George had already telephoned a lawyer to be waiting at the Jefferson Market Court. Black Jerry and Uncle George, with occasional advice from the friendly Central Office detective, discussed what would be the wisest procedure, whether to have an immediate trial, or waive examination and have the case held for the Court of Special Sessions.

"Better have Jennie stand trial to-night," argued Uncle George, who had the wisdom of long experience in such matters. "That'll give her two trials: two

chances — see? The judge to-night may be easy on her, and let her off. On the other hand, the worst he can do is to hold her for Special Sessions."

To that Jerry agreed.

"And, of course, the wise thing is for her to plead guilty and throw herself on the mercy of the court," Uncle George went on. "And you, Jerry, you'd better keep as much out of it as you can — you can't help much; and I'll do the same. We'll leave it up to the lawyer."

The car stopped and they all got out into the rain before a dingy red building. Overhead an Elevated train went thundering through the night.

"Understand what you're to do, Jennie?" queried Uncle George.

"Yes," said Jennie.

At the last moment the old man could not forego giving further words to his provoked artistic sense. "It was raw work, Jennie, awfully raw work. . . . But remember — keep your head in there."

She felt Casey slip a hand under her arm, and guided by him she went up through the wide portals of the building, across the rear of the court-room, and through a passage into a grimy chamber in which some ten or a dozen women lounged about awaiting trial. For all her sense of impending personal disaster, Jennie looked her fellow-prisoners over quickly. A few were bedraggled, hats awry, with skirts rudely dissociated from waists, and others had high-colored, bold-eyed faces. Circumstances had acquainted Jennie with a wide area of life, and she knew what these women were charged with. She was not shocked; this was the way things were; but she drew apart from the others with instinctive repugnance.

She was not here long. Casey had promised expedition, and ten minutes later he led her into a great, high-ceilinged room that to her alert eyes seemed a small, packed theater. She heard an official in brass buttons call her name and she was pressed up before a long, counter-like affair behind which, beneath a drop-light, sat a man in a black robe who did not even look up — so that all Jennie saw of her judge was his black shoulders, a hand that rapidly signed endless documents, and a luminous bald head. She heard the official mechanically chew out a speech with remarkable rapidity and unintelligibility, ending with "Are you ready for trial now?"

"Yes," quavered Jennie.

A man who had appeared at Jennie's side spoke up quickly, persuasively.

"Your Honor, my client admits her guilt, and we stand perfectly ready to make immediate restitution of the amount which she came into illegal possession of. Your Honor, the defendant is only sixteen, what she did was her first offense, and she did it in one of the irresponsible moments of childhood without realizing the gravity of her act. I therefore suggest to your Honor that you permit us to make restitution, and that you severely reprimand the prisoner and dismiss her and give her another chance upon her definite promise —"

"Judge, I won't stand for anything of the sort!" declared a voice on the other side of the bailiff — a voice Jennie knew to be Mr. Morrison's.

At this the magistrate for the first time looked up from the papers he had been signing. He had tired, blasé eyes with tiny purple folds beneath them and wrinkled skin where full jowls must once have swayed.



His faculties, trained to quick observation, instantaneously noted three points: first, that Jennie was young and well-dressed and pretty — obviously this was an affair differing from the disorderly cases which constituted his nightly grind; second, that a city press reporter was pushing near; and third, that out in the audience was a group of uptown ladies, perhaps wives of important men, such as every night appeared in court seeking sensation. The magistrate instantly sensed a chance for publicity; few things help so well to establish the reputation which leads to higher judicial positions as frequent and striking appearance in the papers.

"I'll see what there is in this case," he said. "Officer Casey, take the stand."

Casey did so. Eyes on him, Jennie hardly breathed, but Casey made his testimony as lenient as he dared. He even referred to Black Jerry merely as "Mr. Malone," and to the Pekin merely as "a restaurant."

Jennie was then ordered to the stand. Sitting on high at the magistrate's elbow she was a-tremble with fright — stage-fright and the more fundamental fear as to what was going to happen to her. Her eyes swept out over the crowd: she saw her father and Uncle George sitting obscurely in the back seat of the court-room; and nearer to her she picked out the pale face of Harry Edwards.

She pulled herself together and faced the magistrate, her quick wits having come back to her. She was afraid, but she acted more afraid than she really was, and also more contrite. In response to the magistrate's questioning, she made her confession just as she had made it a little earlier to her father and Uncle George, leaving Slim Jackson entirely out of the affair.

"You know what you have been guilty of?" the magistrate demanded with impressive severity when she had ended.

"Yes," answered Jennie.

"You have been guilty of forgery. You are a young girl and I hope this will be a lesson to you. Are your parents living?"

"My father is, sir."

"Is he in court?"

"I think not, sir."

"Officer Casey" — severely — "why did n't you notify this girl's father to be in court?"

"I believe he is here, your Honor," Casey had to admit.

The magistrate gave Jennie a sharp glance. Then he spoke to his bailiff.

"Find this girl's father and bring him to me."

A minute later Black Jerry was pushed through the gate in the railing and up before the desk. At sight of him the magistrate stared.

"Why, it's Jerry Malone! — Black Jerry!" he exclaimed.

He saw that the reporter was leaning eagerly over his desk and that the uptown ladies were excitedly attentive. He was a judge who roared righteously from the bench when effective and safe opportunity was offered; and this was developing into an unusual chance for desirable publicity. His tired, routine voice sounded out sharply, clearly, so that it reached throughout the courtroom.

"Black Jerry!" he repeated. "That changes the case entirely! Jerry Malone — the notorious, the infamous Black Jerry!" He fairly hammered Jerry with his words.

"Do you think you are fit to have a child under your care? Your influence is enough to ruin any child! No wonder this girl forged that check! And Heavens, man," he drove on, "just being known as the child of Black Jerry is enough to ruin any girl's chances, even if she wants to be decent! Being known as your child, that is enough to stamp her with a bad name — that is enough to make decent people want to keep away from her!"

"Your Honor —" began Black Jerry huskily.

"Silent!" The magistrate pounded his desk with his gavel. "And who knows, Jerry Malone, that you were not behind all this, putting the girl up to it! A reform school may be what your daughter needs — anyhow, she ought to be taken out of your custody. I'm going to hold this case for further examination — to examine into the character of the girl, and to examine into your part in this affair, Black Jerry. This court stands for wiping out the practice of an old crook teaching his child to become a crook, too!" And then with a louder thwack of his hammer: "Prisoner held for further examination on the charge of forgery, bail one thousand dollars! Next case!"

"But, your Honor!" the lawyer tried to protest.

"Next case!" roared the magistrate.

That was all. Jennie shrank down from the witness stand. She saw some bills come out of the big wallet of Uncle George, and she saw these bills pass to the lawyer, and then pass to a man behind a grilled enclosure beside the magistrate. Some papers were signed, and then she followed Black Jerry up the aisle, all eyes staring at them, and out of the court-room.

Uncle George had a taxicab waiting, and into a corner of this Jennie huddled herself. The three of them were

silent, but now and then she glanced covertly at her father. His dark face was set, glowering. She sensed that there was something going on behind that grim face, and all the way home she wondered what that something might be.

## CHAPTER V

### TWO MEN PLAN A LIFE

UNCLE GEORGE, you and Jennie go on upstairs," said Jerry when the taxicab had returned them to the Pekin, and they had entered the hallway. "I'll be up in a minute — I gotta pass an eye over how things are going in my joint."

He stepped through the side door and peered through the screens. To the hard-working music of his two-piece orchestra, general dancing was in progress; and as far as he could see, there was that atmosphere of hilarious, evil-seeming *abandon*, behind which was a strict observance of the letter of the law, that he had so carefully worked out as the character of his establishment. He slipped around the rear of the big room, spoke to the cashier and examined the receipts, which were excellent, spoke to his manager, and was back behind the screens on his way out, when a hand touched his arm. Turning, he saw Slim Jackson.

"Just heard Jennie got pinched and hustled off to court," said Slim in a low voice, from which he managed to suppress any concern as to his own person. "How'd it come out?"

"Has n't come out yet," Jerry returned shortly.

"But was n't there a trial? Did n't Jennie have to take the stand?"

"Yes."

"Anybody in it with her? Did she say?"

"Said she'd done the whole thing herself. But what business is that of yours?" Jerry demanded gruffly.



"I guess I can't help being interested in what happens to Jennie, even if you do happen to be sore at me."

His manner and tone were those of unjustly underrated and suspected friendship. Black Jerry turned abruptly and went out. Friendship vanished from Slim's handsome face; on it appeared a great relief; it became shrewd, calculating. He'd had a close call, all right; well, in the future he'd have to be more careful.

Upstairs, Jerry closed the sitting-room door and crossed to where Jennie sat in a large chair, and glowered silently down upon her. She fully expected one of those big clenching and unclenching hands to strike her. She looked up at him steadily, fear in her heart — but she did not flinch, she did not so much as put up an arm to shield her head from the blow. He had not struck her often, but when he had she had taken it as a matter of course; every one was beaten sometimes — that was just a part of living. As far as it was in her ambitious, confident, cynical, generous, self-centered soul (hers was just the selfishness, inflated by her young egotism, which seems an inseparable element of youth), Jennie loved and admired her father above any other person.

"Well, I hope you realize the mess you've got us into," he grated at her.

"Don't hit the kid, Jerry," interrupted Uncle George. He still spoke as the artist provoked by an inferior performance, but he also spoke palliatingly. "It was raw work, sure — and she should have had more sense than to try to pull any such stunt. But we were all young once — we were all crude workers — we all made our bonehead plays."

Black Jerry did not reply to this attempted mediation. He continued glowering at Jennie, his hands working,

his deep chest rising and falling — until there was a knocking at the door.

"Come in!" he said curtly.

The door opened and Harry Edwards entered. The young fellow's quick breathing showed either hurry or excitement, or both.

"Now, what the hell do *you* want?" exploded Black Jerry.

"I was at the trial, Jerry," the young fellow said rapidly, "and I heard what the judge said. You know — about you not being a fit person to have the custody of Jennie — about his perhaps taking her away from you — about perhaps putting her in an institution."

"Well, what of it?" demanded Jerry.

"You know that I know, Jerry," the high-wrought young fellow went on earnestly, "that what that bum of a judge said about you is all bunk. I know what you really are, and I know you're all right. But what the judge said about you, he really thinks; and that's what the world thinks of you — and he'll take Jennie away from you, somehow, as sure as shooting!"

Harry stepped nearer; his whole body was tense with excited purpose. "But listen, Jerry — that judge would n't take Jennie away from me!"

"From you!" Jerry exclaimed. "What are you driving at?"

"Let Jennie and me get married."

"What!"

"Don't you see?" urged Harry. "They've got nothing against me, and I've got a good job — and if I were married to her, they'd never send her away. That'd really be the same as your keeping her, Jerry. To make it all safe, we could be married the first thing in the morning!"

Black Jerry stared at the eager young face. "You want to do this because you want to save Jennie?"

"Yes. And also because —" He broke off, flushing; it was hard to say the thing in public like this. But he braced himself and spoke. "I also want to do it because I love Jennie."

"Oh, you do!" Jerry gazed at him fixedly, his coal-black eyes piercingly keen. After a moment he spoke, and shortly:

"Nothing doing in that line, young fellow. I got some ideas of my own — very different ideas. And as we've got some business to talk over, I guess you won't mind our excusing you." He firmly pressed the bewildered Harry backwards and opened the door. "Good-night," he said roughly. And then suddenly he gripped the other's hand. "I guess you're a pretty decent guy, Harry."

But before Harry could recover and speak, the door had been closed upon him. Black Jerry turned about.

"Now, we gotta talk about what we're going to do," he said brusquely.

Jennie rose, and started for her bedroom. "I suppose you'd like me out of the way."

"You stay right where you are," Jerry ordered. "This talk's going to be about what's going to happen to you, and you might as well get it first-hand. When we want anything from you, we'll ask you — till then you keep still."

She sank down into the big chair and drew herself back, as small as possible, into a corner; and, a mere spectator, she looked on with fearing, expectant, bright eyes at what was to be the unfoldment of her fate. Black Jerry sat down for the first time, and Uncle George drew

out a long cigar, lighted it, and eyed its end meditatively. There was a brief silence — the cuckoo stepped out of its abode and chirped one o'clock — and then again there was silence about the three.

Uncle George was the first to speak. "Now, don't you worry too much, Jerry," he advised. "This case — why, it's nothing."

"It's a damned big thing! — the biggest thing that ever happened!" came from Jerry as a muffled explosion.

"Why, Jerry!" expostulated the old man. "I tell you we'll get her off easy. We'll fight the case, and I know some mighty strong political influence we can get behind us — Sam Conway'll help me if we need him. About Jennie's being convicted, or taken away from you, don't you worry a minute about that, Jerry!"

"That's not worrying me. I was n't even thinking about that when I said it was a big thing. It's big because of what it means — what it makes me see."

"Makes you see?" queried Uncle George. "See what?"

Jerry's dark face was flushed; again his breath was coming deeply and unevenly. Before him were matters about which it had always been hard for him to speak — matters relating to the emotions. In the past, the undiscovered and unrecognized forces of his crude being had vaguely yet powerfully sensed big ideas, and insensibly the ideas had grown into plans; all had been undefined, incoherent — yet latently all had been there. And now, almost suddenly, what had been vague was growing clear, and those great stirrings were becoming painfully definite. He strove to keep the flood swelling up in him under his control, but it burst the bonds of his restraint — all poured from him at once. But even so he spoke defensively, defiantly, as though what were being exposed

might be unmanly and as though he challenged any one to laugh at him.

"Well, I got a right to like my own kid, ain't I? I got as much right as any other man, no matter how damned good he thinks he is! And I got a right to be proud of my own kid, too — ain't I?"

"Sure you have, Jerry, sure you have," agreed Uncle George appeasingly, though bewildered.

Jennie, hunched back in her corner, held her sharp eyes in wonderment upon the unmatched sight of her eruptively emotional father.

"You bet I got a right to be proud of my kid. I already said a part of this to you to-night, Uncle George. No man's kid has got a right to anything better than my kid, and I've always thought, these last few years, anyway, that sometime, somehow, I was going to give Jennie as good a chance as any other kid. I got a little dough, and Jennie's clever — so why not? I've seen the uptown kids. Those uptown kids with their damned nurses, and their damned parks, and their damned everything else that's swell — they've got all the chances, but they ain't got no more right to a good chance than Jennie. And Jennie" — with an emphasis that mounted to fierceness — "By God, Jennie's going to be something big! I don't know what it's going to be; but, you hear me, it's going to be something big! Jennie's going to have her big chance!"

Uncle George nodded his head. He was surprised at this flaming outburst of pride and purpose — but not greatly surprised; the world in all its phases had been the object of his philosophic observation (and in earlier days the source of his subtly acquired income) and he was equably prepared for any personal revelations or



any twists of fate. But Jennie, drawn up tensely, gazed with parted lips at Black Jerry. Never before had she seen her father like this; and his ringing words stirred a leaping desire in her.

"Every kid has a right to have a chance," Jerry's unloosed torrent of words rushed on. "But what kind of a chance — I mean a real chance, a big chance, the kind them uptown kids have — does a kid down here have? None at all! I've been thinking of that a lot lately. But what happened to-night has made everything a thousand times clearer. Down here is no place for Jennie. If she stays down here, mixing in with the kind of people she's sure to mix with around my place, she's bound to become a crook. I ain't got anything much against crooks, but it's a poor line for a woman. It don't get her anywhere, and she always has a rotten finish."

Never before had Black Jerry spoken at such length. And conscious only of his own troubles, he was not aware that in much of what he said he was roughly voicing the problems and aspirations of tens of thousands of inarticulate others.

"Yes, she's absolutely sure to become a crook if she stays down here — that's plain," he went on. He paused, his big chest rose from a mighty swallow, and he grimly drove out his next sentences. "And that ain't all. I wanted to punch that booze-soaked judge for what he said about me to-night — but after all, that old goat had the proposition sized up just about right. He said it was enough to drag any girl down, having me for a father, and no matter how high up Jennie got, it would smash everything when people learned she was the daughter of Black Jerry Malone. There," he

ended, "is the whole lay-out. And it certainly is one mess!"

Uncle George blinked. The gigantic earnestness of Black Jerry was a thing for even him to marvel at. Then he slowly nodded.

"It sure is one God-awful mess, Jerry. What do you want to do?"

"Ain't I already told you!" Jerry exclaimed. "I want to get Jennie away from down here, and I want to fix things so I won't be a drag on her. And I want action — before that judge can butt in with any court proceedings."

"I suppose you want me to help you?"

"Why else would I be telling you all this junk?" demanded Jerry testily. "Sure I want you — you're the smoothest guy I know."

"I just wanted to be certain you wanted me," Uncle George returned evenly. "Yes, some people do think I'm a smooth article" — a bit complacently — "though I've retired now, you know, Jerry, and am not doing anything except obeying those commandments about loving my neighbor as myself, and keeping my mitts off his bank-roll. But in wandering up and down this here widely press-agented civilization of ours, and in meeting human nature with its manners on and off, and in sitting in every kind of game, why, I just naturally have picked up a thing or two — and everything I've picked up is all yours, Jerry. What do you want to know first?"

"I want to know what's the best thing to do!" Jerry fumed impatiently.

"Well, what do you want Jennie to become?"

"I don't know. I have n't thought about that.

What I first want is for her to have a big chance — as good a chance as any other girl, no matter what the other girl's name is, or how much dough her old man has got. Jennie has a right to the same kind of chance."

"You're willing to play that idea to the limit?"

"I'll put all the chips I got, or hope to have, on that play!"

Wise old Uncle George saw that love for and pride in his daughter were the dominating qualities in this man that the world saw as less than human, and his first suggestion was based upon the probable desire of Jerry to be with the object of his love. "Well," he said meditatively, "some men move away to the end of things where people don't pay much attention to what a man has been."

"Nothing doing," returned Jerry shortly. "In a rough, new country Jennie would n't have the chance I want her to have and she deserves."

"Then you might move to some other city, and start out under a new name."

"What good'd that do?" demanded Black Jerry. "I look like a rough specimen, and I'd still be a drag on Jennie — and when people found out who I was, as they would, it'd all be over. Might as well stay right here. Neither idea is any good, Uncle George."

The older man nodded. "I knew that. I merely mentioned 'em to see whether you were ready to play the *real limit*."

"The *real limit*? What do you mean by that?"

"If you want Jennie to have that big a chance, to go away up and become somebody — why, Jerry, there's only one way, and that's for you and her to part company. You stay Jerry Malone. She becomes some-

body else, who does n't even know you. Can you stand the gaff?"

Black Jerry looked over at his daughter, a tense, breathless huddle, with staring eyes of shining black. Then he swallowed.

"I'll stand it. What's the rest of the idea?"

Uncle George ignored the question. "You might as well give her up of your own accord, Jerry, as have that judge take her from you. . . . What would you yourself do?"

"Me? I might as well stay right here. People know me here, and what they think of me don't bother me a lot. And I've a good business; and I'll be all right as long as I go straight — and I'm going to go straight."

"How much money can you spare for Jennie?"

"I guess you know I'm making good coin here, and you know about how much. Me — the ponies, cards, women, or booze don't interest me and don't get any of my dough; it don't take much for me. The rest of what I make Jennie can have."

"That'll be plenty."

Silently Uncle George considered his forming plan. That it was based upon pretense did not give him one troubled thought. All his life Uncle George, and most of those with whom he mixed, had secured what they wanted by the use of pretense. Pretense was entirely the natural order of life; pretending — that was what every one was doing.

"Well?" Jerry said impatiently.

"Don't be in a hurry, son," said the old man. "Here's the big idea: Jennie's smart all right, and she's a good actor, and she knows twice as much out of books and about real things as those swell uptown girls. But

she's sort of rough around the edges. She needs finish — manners. Beginning to see where we're heading at?"

"Go on!" said the impatient Jerry.

"Here's where we kill two birds with one piece of change. This old town of New York and the little towns about it have got about a thousand plus one or two more swell private schools for girls. I pick out one of the swellest of these private schools — you leave it to me — and I put Jennie into it. She'll be there two or three years, mebbe more: she gets the rough spots polished off, and while she's growing up she makes a bunch of swell girl friends — top-notch families. By the time she's through she'll be just one of the regular fellows to these girls; she'll just naturally belong. And after that — well, after that it depends upon how clever Jennie is."

There was a sharp intake of Jennie's breath. Her black eyes were brilliant with far-visioning excitement.

"I see," said Black Jerry. "But how're you going to put that across?"

"Jennie's an orphan," Uncle George explained with deliberation. "Miller is her last name. Parents died when she was a baby. Brought up by an uncle, a Western mining engineer, who recently died. All her life she has had to knock about Western mining towns — which will explain her rough edges. That's the dope I'll hand out to the lady-boss of the school I pick out. To her I'll be Jennie's guardian — though I'm going to keep out of this game as far as I can — I might queer it. I'll tell the lady-boss that Jennie's been left some money, and that she's come East for a real education. Well, how does all that listen?"



"You were king of them all in your day, Uncle George," Jerry said admiringly, "and you ain't forgot a trick since. It listens great! But how about between that school and right here and now?"

"You've got to be alibied, Jerry. Jennie runs away from home — runs away to-night. That's all you know about it, except that you guess she got scared over being arrested — you have n't any idea where she is. Stand pat on that, and the police and courts can't touch you — though, of course, Jennie's bail will be forfeited."

"I'll square with you, Uncle George, for that thousand you put up."

"Any time it suits you, Jerry. Now, about Jennie's get-away from here — you leave that all to me. Well, there's the whole proposition. What d'you say? But before you answer, Jerry, or you, Jennie, remember that if you say 'yes' and if this goes through, you are seeing each other to-night for the last time. And if in the years ahead you ever should meet by accident, why, you just don't know each other."

Black Jerry gazed fixedly at his daughter; his set, square face paled to yellow, it could not pale to white. Jennie, her breath suspended, gazed back at him, her eyes black stars.

At length Jerry spoke. "It's a great idea, and I'm for it," he said with a rigid calmness.

"How about you, Jennie?" Uncle George inquired.

"I — I think it's — it's wonderful!" she breathed.

"Then it's all settled. Jennie, you're all right as a girl from a Western mining town in the clothes you have on. Just slip a few little extra things in a bag. I'll put you in some quiet, respectable hotel for two or three days, until I've arranged about the school. I'll

have a taxi waiting around the corner a block north; meet me there in ten or fifteen minutes."

With a few more words of instruction Uncle George went out. Jerry and Jennie had risen, and they now stood, face fixed on face, alone. A moment passed without either moving or speaking. Then Jerry's big chest heaved convulsively, and he reached out and caught her to him and kissed her fiercely. She clung tightly around his neck and kissed him again and again.

"Jennie!" he said hoarsely — "Jennie!"

"Oh, dad — dad!" she breathed passionately: — thrillingly startled, for this was the first time he had kissed her since he had come out of the Tombs when she had been six.

"Jennie," the heavy bass quavered on — "you're the biggest thing in the world to me!"

"And I love you more than any one else!" she sobbed.

They stood in close, trembling embrace for a long minute. Then almost roughly Jerry removed her arms and pushed her from him.

"I hope it works out all right, and you get your big chance," he said gruffly, and he turned abruptly and went out the door and down the stairway.

Crying softly, Jennie stood gazing at the door through which he had passed. Then, remembering her orders, she entered her room and hastily packed a few necessaries in a bag. Back in the sitting-room she thought of her aunt, and very gently she opened the sick woman's door. The light from the sitting-room fell dimly across the white face; and gazing at it Jennie remembered all the kindness of that loving but ineffectual person. Still weeping softly she crossed to the bed and kissed the worn face good-bye.

A minute later she was creeping down the stairs, the tender emotion of the few minutes before already giving place to the high spirits of youth, to the excitement of unknown adventure lying just ahead. At the doorway opening from the hall she set down her bag and stepped inside and through the screens; this in accord with Uncle George's final injunctions for clearing her father from being an accessory in her flight — that she was to be last seen by others than Black Jerry. Her rapid glance about showed her Black Jerry near the cashier's desk across the café, his back steadily toward her — this also per instructions; and she saw Harry Edwards alone at a little table, sunk in dejection after his impetuous offer of half an hour before, brooding over a sandwich and a glass of beer; and she saw Slim Jackson seating himself after a dance with Daisy White.

Several persons, seeing her in the doorway, called to her. At the sound of her name Harry glanced eagerly up, then looked gloomily back at his table. Slim arose, half started toward her, then remembering her father's presence sat down again; but he smiled at her, tauntingly, confidently — and despite her excitement over her own great future just beginning, a phrase of his flashed back upon her: "I'm going away up, Jen — you just watch me!"

She gave another glance about; she had a momentary sense of saying good-bye to what had been her world, of saying good-bye to what had been herself. Then she slipped out, picked up her bag, and two minutes afterward she had stepped into a darkened taxi beside Uncle George.

"All right, Jack," Uncle George said to the chauffeur; and to Jennie: "The driver is safe — is a friend of

mine — has got reason to be; so don't be afraid they'll ever trace you through him."

Ten minutes later Jennie was rolling up Fifth Avenue, the Pekin, and Harry, and Slim Jackson, and even her father, all for the moment forgotten. Tense, excited, exultant, her imagination stimulated to the most daring possibilities, she was gazing forward into the distantly glimpsed, shimmering land which she was entering . . . wondering whom she was going to meet in this new world — wondering what was going to happen to her — pulsing with determination to play her part well in whatever circumstances the curtained future might place her. . . .

And being sixteen, and having a dazzling, unknown world opening to her, her mind could not glance backward to the Pekin: could not see Black Jerry, seated at the little table in his private office, his big hands gripped before him, his set face looking straight across the room and seeing nothing at all . . . having not even a glimpse of the drama of tangled human passions and relationships, that he and Uncle George, thinking and acting according to their training, and Life, all working together, had set into motion.

## CHAPTER VI

### JENNIE'S NEW WORLD

FOR two irksome, suspense-fevered days, according to Uncle George's instruction, Jennie played at being indisposed and kept to her room in that conventionally proper hotel for women, The Martha Washington. Aside from her fears, her bold dreams, her constant waiting for the promised return of Uncle George, she had but one occupation for her mind — this was the newspapers. Her first morning here she had read a romantic and dramatic account of the trial of the "beautiful girl forger," with its culmination in the discovery that she was the daughter of Jerry Malone, and in the most righteous and deserved tongue-lashing the magistrate had given the notorious Black Jerry. And the morning after that she read of the second hearing of the case, at which it had developed that the "pretty girl forger" had run away, and at which the magistrate had stormed almost equally at Black Jerry and at Officer Casey, and at which he had demanded that Casey and the police force find the Malone girl and bring her straight before him.

Jennie shivered. So all the world knew what she had done, and knew she had run away! So Casey and all the police force were now after her! She held her breath every time footsteps sounded in the corridor, expecting to be haled back to face it all.

But the only person who came in upon her was the maid, to straighten her room a bit and bring her her invalid's portion of food.



At five o'clock of the second afternoon her telephone rang. She crept fearfully out of her bed, took down the receiver, wavered, then in a disguised voice said, "Hello." But she was instantly relieved; the voice that sounded in her ear was Uncle George's. He told her to be ready to leave in half an hour and to put on the motor veil which would be brought up to her.

Thirty minutes later, dressed and veiled, and acting the semi-invalid, she met Uncle George in the lobby below. In this conventional atmosphere Uncle George was in manner and language suggestive of an amiable and beloved deacon; he asked for his "niece's" bill, settled it, took from the desk a folder announcing various religious services, and then with great solicitude escorted the weak-seeming Jennie to the doorway. Within this he halted until a porter had placed Jennie's bag in a closed car waiting at the curb. For a minute longer his whole concern seemed to be engrossed in his questions regarding Jennie's health, but actually his whole attention was in the seemingly casual but all-seeing glances he cast along the street, east and west. Then with apparent leisure, but with carefully timed dispatch, he led her across the sidewalk, pressed her before him into the closed car, shut the door, and the car moved away — but not before Jennie's quick eyes had noted that the chauffeur was the "safe friend" of Uncle George who had driven the taxicab which had brought her hither.

"Did anybody see us come out?" Jennie breathed.

"There was n't a copper in sight. And if there had been, I'm sure he would n't have suspected anything."

"You know the police are after me, Uncle George?"

"Sure I know." He caught the strain in her voice.

"But don't you worry about that, Jennie," he said kindly, and with a note of self-satisfaction in his voice. "You've made one swell get-away. The Martha Washington Hotel is the last joint the coppers would ever think of the daughter of Black Jerry going to."

"But the papers said the judge had ordered the police to send out a general alarm."

"But what good 'll that do? Lucky for us, the night you were tried no newspaper photographer was around trying to flash you. And I told your father to burn up all the photographs of you. So the police and the papers can't print any picture of you; about all they can do is to say that a pretty girl disappeared — and I guess every young female between fourteen and forty thinks that that is an exact description of herself. Yes, you're safe all right. Anyhow," he reassured her, "the case ain't so serious — that check was for only twenty-five. Of course that judge made a big holler; and the papers played it up big — but that was because news was scarce, and because they could pull the 'pretty girl' stunt, and because you were Jerry Malone's daughter. But it's mostly noise, my dear — just the concussion of one large word against another. So don't you worry."

"But dad? They're after dad!"

"They'll try to make trouble for him, sure — but they can't do a thing. He's got a perfect alibi as far as your running away is concerned, and that fool judge's charge that he put you up to writing phony checks, of course they can never fasten that charge on Jerry. Everything'll soon quiet down with your father, and things will be the same as ever. So don't you worry about your dad, my dear — don't you worry."

Huddled back in the car, the fear of a fugitive upon

her in spite of the complete masking of the motor veil, Jennie was silent until they had entered the park. Then she spoke.

"Where are we going to, Uncle George?"

"I thought you understood. We're headed for a private school."

"You mean you've already found one?"

"Yes, and already settled everything about your entering it."

"Uncle George!" For the moment she forgot the past, which had seemed to be clutching pantingly at her shoulder. "What's the school like?"

"Well, it sure does have class!"

"Was it much trouble? Finding it, I mean?"

"Not much. I remembered that Sam Conway was a sort of a silent partner in that big contracting firm of Harrison and Company; and I knew that Mr. Harrison, who is something of a swell, has a daughter —"

"Is this the Harrison and Company where Sam Conway has just got Harry Edwards a 'job?'" Jennie interrupted.

"I don't know — mebbe. I knew Mr. Harrison has a daughter in a school, and I knew any school he would pick out would be the best. So I asked Sam to inquire, casual-like, of Mr. Harrison what school his girl's at — which Sam does and tells me. You've got to have social and business references to get into that school; but I knew it, so I was all readied up with references when I went out to the school to-day and settled things. Braithe-wood Hall is the school's name, and Miss Gresham is the combination of hostess, grand duchess, secretary of state, and traffic cop who runs it. I guess she owns the joint. It certainly does have class, Jennie! And another

big point in its favor is that if the police ever do want to make trouble — in a small way, Jennie, you're a sort of fugitive from justice — Braithewood Hall is the last place where they'd ever look for you, and even if they saw you there, they would n't believe you are you."

As the car made its way out of the city and then through the pleasant reaches of Westchester County, Uncle George went over his interview with Miss Gresham: he had told her in detail the story about Jennie's being an orphan, about her Western life. As they sped on, Jennie, huddled back in her corner of the car, all her faculties reaching forward in poignant suspense, wondered throbbingly about this new world toward which she was hurrying: what was the school going to be like? — what its grand duchess principal? — what the girls? — and would she, could she, really ever get on with them?

Presently, at twilight, after an hour's running, the car turned through a high wrought-iron gate in a brick wall with stone coping. It followed a curving drive through low-shorn trees and a precise lawn, and came to a stop before a handsome ivy-covered brick building with a large white-pillared portico that looked out upon the now dull waters of Long Island Sound.

"Here we are, Jennie," whispered Uncle George. "Don't forget who you are, and the part you have got to play. Come on."

In a daze, yet watching everything, Jennie followed him. After being taken in charge by an amazingly neat maid in black, she found herself in a large room with shelves and shelves of books and many comfortable chairs and a business-like desk, and she heard Uncle George saying in his best manner:

"Miss Gresham, this is my ward about whom I talked to you to-day — Jennie Miller."

"I'm very glad to meet you, Miss Miller," Miss Gresham said in a voice modulated to a careful graciousness, holding out her hand.

"Thank you — m — ma'am."

As the hand was withdrawn after a light pressure, Jennie gave a quick glance at Miss Gresham. Certainly she was unlike any teacher or principal Jennie had ever known. She reminded Jennie more of the ladies she had seen on Fifth Avenue on soft spring afternoons, leaning back in their leisurely moving cars. She was slender, of very erect yet not stiff carriage, and wore a distinguished black silk gown with a bit of train to it. Her thin face, with its firm yet delicate lines, and her smartly done graying hair, made her seem a very great lady to Jennie. Jennie's dominant feeling in that moment of first meeting was one of awe and doubt: could she ever, ever, conduct herself in a manner that would win even so much as this lady's toleration?

"I believe I covered everything this afternoon," she heard Uncle George say — and Jennie found herself marveling at the suavity and poise, the air of perfect culture, with which the old man was bearing himself. "But I wish to make myself quite clear on one point. As I told you, my ward, through the limited opportunities and peculiar circumstances of her life up to this time, knows a great deal about many things and nothing at all about other things. Now, I want her to learn these other things; to acquire the proper manners; to learn to be a lady."

Miss Gresham inclined her head ever so little. "I understand. I presume you have satisfied yourself,



before bringing her here, as to the ability of Braithewood Hall to serve your ward in this manner — just as I have satisfied myself in regard to you.”

“But you can really know nothing about me, Miss Gresham,” smiled Uncle George.

“It is a necessity in my profession to judge the character of a person by my impressions,” said Miss Gresham.

“Thank you” — and Uncle George made a grave and dignified bow. “Oh, yes — there are two other points which I almost forgot. First, my ward’s clothing was obviously unsuited to our present plans, so when she came East she brought only the bare necessities for travel. I presume you can see that she is provided with a suitable outfit. I shall leave extra funds with you for this purpose.”

Miss Gresham nodded. “One of my teachers specializes in helping the girls in just such matters.”

“Excellent. The second point is this: My ward is not only an orphan, but has no near relations and few friends — and having no family myself, I have no home to take her to. Therefore she has no place to return to during vacations. I shall be glad to have her remain here during the shorter vacations, and to have you place her in some girls’ camp of the highest class during the summers. I shall make the necessary financial provision for this.”

“That can easily be arranged. Is there any other matter?”

“Yes. I should mention that my affairs require that I should constantly travel; in consequence I shall be able to visit my ward rarely, and shall not be able to give her the direct attention I should like. I have therefore placed her affairs in the hands of a firm of attorneys,

with whom you may always communicate. Here is their card."

"Thank you. Is that all?"

"I believe we have covered everything."

"I presume, then, you would like a few parting words with your ward, so I shall now leave you alone with her. As our fall term opened only three days ago she will lose little, and we shall do our best for her. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. Please let me thank you in advance for all I know you are going to do for Jennie." And with his grave dignity Uncle George bowed over her hand.

"Dinner is served at seven, Miss Miller. When you are ready, ring this bell and a maid will show you to your room. You need not bother to dress to-night."

When Miss Gresham had gone, Uncle George held his gaze of sober dignity upon Jennie for a moment. Then he gazed cautiously about, and when he looked at her again one lashless eye drooped in a slow wink, and he grinned.

"Well, Jennie," he whispered, "how was I in the part?"

"You did it great, Uncle George! If I had n't known you, I'd have believed it all — about me — and about you."

"It was easy, Jennie — nothing at all." He raised a deprecatory hand. "I rather hated, though, to put that across on a lady — but it's all for the glory of God."

But Uncle George was really delighted with himself. He was truly attached to Black Jerry and Jennie; and he had made a successful use of highly trained faculties that long had been disused — and he had used them in what for him was a highly moral and soul-warming performance.

"But, Uncle George," Jennie whispered nervously, "do you think I can ever act my part in a place like this?"

"Sure you will, dear! But I want to slip you a few points — take 'em from an old man who has had to read human nature in all languages." If Uncle George had not early in life drifted into devious ways, he might have become a preacher, so strong was his inclination to discourse. "You come here labeled as pretty crude, so if you make a break it's just what's expected of you, so don't let it worry you. But keep yourself pretty much in the background until you know the ropes. When in doubt about what to do, wait and watch what the other girl does with her fork. That rule applies to everything else as well as to eating. Understand?"

"I think I do, Uncle George."

"And here's the great thing, Jennie: Keep yourself quiet, obscure, until you gradually begin to get in solid here — you've got four years to turn the trick, so you can take your time. Remember, you've got to *keep yourself down*. If necessary, be more ignorant and crude than you really are." And then Uncle George spoke sententiously, in the tone of universal and eternal truth. "Women, and girls, too, Jennie, are curious cusses. They don't care how superior to them a woman or girl is who was born at the top, or who some time ago solidly landed there. But they're as jealous as hell of, and they hate like hell, the girl of their own bunch or a lower bunch, who is smarter or prettier than they are. They'll eat her raw and alive. Get the drift of what I'm saying?"

"I think I do."

"You'll not be likely to go wrong if you remember

what I said about underplaying yourself. I don't know just how this here business is going to come out in the end — but it would be an awful big help, Jennie, whatever way the thing breaks, if you could come out of this school with a few classy girls as your solid friends. But don't go after 'em — let 'em come to you. Be quiet — grow slow — don't really let yourself out until you know the girls have taken you on as one of themselves, and mebbe you'd better not do it even then. You know the way for a wise guy to trim a sucker is to let the sucker think himself a wise guy at first and let him do all the early winning — and the same rule, my dear, holds good for every other sort of diplomatic career."

"I'll try to remember it all, and do it all, Uncle George."

"If you do, Jennie, if you play the cards right," he said with the emphasis of certainty, "why, in three years you'll be one of the first families in this here joint!"

He gave her much more advice, gathered out of his experience with the worldliness of the world. Then, all his own worldliness fallen away from him, and being for the moment just an affectionate old man, he kissed her very simply.

"I'll be pulling hard for you to make good, my dear," he said. "Good-bye and good luck!"

Recovering his former bearing he walked out. Through the doorway Jennie saw the maid hold out to him his hat and stick and saw him accept them with his sober mien. And then he was gone.

## CHAPTER VII

### JENNIE MAKES A FRIEND

**L** EFT alone, the last human tie removed that bound her to the life she had known up to this time, her heart throbbing wildly, Jennie looked sharply about this large room of austere elegance.

She was seized with a fear that bordered closely upon a frantic impulse to flee out of this splendid establishment containing only that which was unknown. But she remembered Casey — the police court judge — she remembered her father, giving her up that she might have this very chance; and to reinforce these counter impulses there came the reflex of her audacious, dogged courage. She moved over and pressed the bell Miss Gresham had indicated.

Almost instantly the very neat maid entered who had admitted her. "You are ready to go to your room?"

"Yes. Where is my bag?"

"It has already been taken up, miss."

Jennie followed the maid up a wide stairway, muted by a deep rug, with white banisters, through a wide, airy corridor, through another corridor, and to a door which the maid opened. She allowed Jennie to enter first, then followed her.

"This is your room," said the maid, "and that door there opens into your bathroom. Dinner is served. I'll wait outside to show you to the dining-room."

Jennie gazed about her, bewildered, awed. The room was a combination bedroom and sitting-room, high,



airy, as large as three of the rooms at home — and in it were two beds, though the second bed had no significance to her at that moment. The woodwork was white, the window hangings, the bed-spreads, and the coverings of the chairs, were all dominated by a soft warm blue; and at one end was a fireplace with logs of real wood in it. Dazed, Jennie automatically stepped into the bathroom. She had never known there was such a bathroom! — it was all porcelain and white tile and glistening nickel. All these luxuries for her!

She wanted to stay here and examine in detail these exquisite marvels of her new home; but there was that maid waiting for her, and instinct told her it would never do to show excitement over marvels that must be commonplaces to every other person here. So she laid aside hat and coat, quickly removed the soil of her motor-ride, and joined the maid without — who led her back the way they had come, through a broad corridor on the ground floor, to a wide doorway which gave into a large, brightly lighted room. It seemed as large as a restaurant to Jennie — only different — different in a nicer way. She felt lost, but at once she saw Miss Gresham coming toward her.

“This way, Miss Miller; I’ll show you to your place.” And as Jennie trailed behind her: “Miss Gould, who is the teacher that always sits at your table, is ill to-night, so I’ll introduce you to your table-mates — I’ve already told them a bit about you.”

They halted at a table at which sat six girls. Jennie managed to achieve a bow as each girl was presented, but she was too confused to hear a single name. Seated in her place, several minutes passed during which her eyes saw only the soup which had been set before her

— but she heard a constant chattering, and a light giggling. Then her self-control began to return; her first impulse was to be defiant to these young swells. But she recalled Uncle George's instruction to hold herself down, and when she glanced up she was a very shy-looking person.

There were perhaps a hundred girls in the room, in dresses that fairly took Jennie's breath. Their style and obvious cost made her suddenly and acutely conscious of her own dress which seemed to her common and shabby in this company: — and then, in turn, she became panically conscious of who she really was. She was Jennie Malone! Did these girls read the newspapers? If they did, what would they do if they were this minute to learn that among them, one of them, was a girl who three nights before had been on trial in a police court for forgery, who was now hiding away from police and courts and prisons — who was the daughter of the man that black-robed judge had wrathfully denounced as “the notorious, the infamous Black Jerry Malone!”

A prickling shiver ran through Jennie, and she held her breath, waiting tensely for these girls to rise and cry out against her. But the hundred girls chattered on. . . .

Eating little, and being very careful how she ate it, Jennie covertly but sharply began to take note of the girls at her own table. At her right sat a girl, perhaps eighteen, her body with the languid droop which at that time was considered smart, with full lips, a short nose, large, insolent eyes, and dark hair which was bobbed: an irregularly handsome girl who showed she was fully conscious of her beauty, and conscious of the place in

the world which belonged to her. She was talking all the time, and Jennie quickly sensed that this girl dominated her table, from the way in which most of the other girls heeded her most casual remarks — some of which were perhaps more daring than they would have been but for the empty chair belonging to the presiding teacher — and giggled at her every essay at humor.

On Jennie's left was a girl of about her own age: all the impression Jennie got of her just then was that she was a rather pretty blonde, that she had blue eyes and that she was very quiet.

The girl with the bobbed hair — Gloria, Jennie had heard her called — after having touched upon a score of subjects with remarks that had been deliciously humorous, judged by the giggles with which she had been applauded, presently turned her cool, direct eyes upon the diffident-seeming Jennie.

"Believe your name is Miller," she drawled.

"Yes."

"And Miss Gresham said you came from out West — Wyoming."

"I do."

"That's where the cowboys come from." The girl looked Jennie up and down with slow, superior eyes until she knew she had the attention of the others. "Tell me, Miller," she drawled, "does that get-up you have on give us an idea of how all the cowboys look?"

A hesitating titter ran about the table at this hit.

"Don't mind what she says, please!" the blonde at Jennie's left whispered quickly.

But Jennie did mind. It did not come to her that the other might possibly be ill-bred; she was merely aware that she was being made sport of. She forgot for the

moment Uncle George's legacy of wise injunctions. But though angry, her mind controlled her anger.

"They don't look exactly like this," she replied with suspicion-lulling embarrassment. "There's one great difference."

"Indeed!" said the other in her musical drawl. "And what is that difference, Miller?"

Jennie looked her straight in the eye. "The chief difference is that most of the cowboys, the very rough cowboys, have a haircut just like yours, Gloria dear."

Gloria gasped, and turned very red. The other girls stared at the two in loose-faced silence. Jennie gazed steadily at Gloria, waiting, challenge in her eyes — but after a moment Gloria's gaze wavered and her high-colored face fell to her food. There was painful silence at the table during the rest of the meal.

Jennie got back to her room as quickly as she could. Before she had time to think over her experiences in the dining-room, or even to look about her new quarters, her door opened and there was the pretty blonde who had sat at her left. There was a moment of embarrassed silence. Then the other girl spoke.

"I hope you don't mind my coming in, for, you see" — smiling — "this is my room, too."

"Oh!"

"Did n't you know I was your room-mate?"

"No. I have n't been here long enough to be told anything." Here was a new difficulty, a new problem! — a room-mate, and one who probably had everything and knew everything. How was she going to get on, living so intimately with this unknown girl from another world?

"I hope we're going to be good friends," the other said shyly. "Let's sit down."

They did so. Again there was a moment of embarrassed silence. Then the other burst out:

"I think Gloria Raymond was perfectly horrid to-night! But it was just like her. She's got a horrible temper."

"I guess I lost my temper, too," Jennie responded discreetly.

"You treated her perfectly right — though none of the rest of us dare talk that way to her. I guess she has more money than any other girl here — and she does about as she pleases with her aunt — and she's been to a lot of parties — and she's got a lot of beaux — so she thinks she's just about all right and just a little bit better than any of the rest of us. But I would n't mind the way she behaves if I were you."

"I'm not going to," said Jennie.

"She's fairly decent to me, because my brother is one of the fellows she's sweet on."

"Is your brother in school, too?"

"No. Kenneth graduated from college years and years ago. Three years I think it was. But I hope he does n't let anything — you understand — serious grow up between him and Gloria, for I'd hate to have Gloria in the family."

With her pleasant, friendly smile Jennie's room-mate changed the subject. "I wish I'd lived out West. I suppose you shoot well, and ride like everything. You know the school has a stable and most of the girls here ride almost every day. I'm sure you can show them what real riding is."

Jennie saw danger before her. "I was always afraid



of guns," she said, "and my uncle got hurt riding when I was a little girl and would never let me get on a horse. So I really can't do anything that Western girls are supposed to do."

"I wish you'd tell me about yourself — if you don't mind," said the other.

The girl was interested and eager. And so Jennie, inventing carefully where Uncle George had not supplied her with data, told of the rough Wyoming life of that recently created orphan, Jennie Miller. Subconsciously she followed Uncle George's advice to "underplay" herself; or perhaps she was rather acting from the dictates of her own instincts. She was seemingly shy, modest, and very open. She confessed that she knew nothing, either about books or how to behave among people; and she confessed, with every appearance of simple frankness, how it was that she had come here, with only a few rough items of clothing. Her watchful eyes noted that her unknown room-mate was warmly sympathetic.

"And now I wish you'd tell me all about yourself," she said when she had finished.

Her room-mate's blue eyes opened wide. "Why, I thought you knew all about me!"

"I don't even know your name."

"No! It's Sue Harrison. Why, Miss Gresham told me your guardian had brought you to Braithewood Hall because he knew my father, and that's why she put us together here and at table."

Jennie saw several things at once — one of which was that danger might grow out of this reputed friendship were a correction not made. "I'm sure it's just a misunderstanding," she said quickly. "My guardian

does n't know your father. He merely happened to hear of this school through one of your father's friends — that's all there is to that. Though, if you're not sorry, I'm glad we're to be room-mates."

And to herself she was saying: So this was the daughter of that Mr. Harrison whose silent partner Sam Conway was! — of that Mr. Harrison for whom Harry Edwards had just begun to work!

Sue declared that there was n't much to tell of herself. Besides herself there were just her mother and father and brother; they lived in New York in a house in the East Seventies just off Fifth Avenue; in summer they lived at their country-place on Long Island. That was all. . . . It was n't much as Sue told it, but within herself Jennie was gasping.

They talked on for two hours, Jennie seemingly frank, Sue unaffectedly so; and presently they had dropped into the familiarity of calling each other Jennie and Sue. Jennie was definitely drawn toward the other, though she did not quite know why. Not till the events of a much later time brought her a clearer vision was Jennie to appreciate the fullness of her own fortune in making such a friend, or was she really to understand Sue. Sue was too uncomplex for her to understand at present: not very clever, not very aggressive, just a simple, unassuming, likable girl — a splendid specimen of her type.

At length the two girls got into bed. But though she was worn and the bed was marvelously soft and caressing, there was no immediate sleep for Jennie. This was the first period she had had in which she could think without interruption, could consider the many elements of her situation. She lay there in the darkness,

athrill with exultation. What a world of things had happened in the last three days! She was now at last really started in her new life — she had started up — she was going far — very far! . . .

Then her mind shot back to the Pekin. She thought of her father, whom she loved more than any other person, and whom according to the arrangement she was never to see again, and if seeing him by chance she was not to recognize. And she thought about her Aunt Mary — kind Aunt Mary! And about Harry Edwards. The way he talked about caring for her was, of course, all nonsense; but just now she felt tender toward Harry — he really was a nice boy. . . . They were all cut out of her life. Definitely! Forever! She cried softly into her pillow. . . .

And then she thought of Slim Jackson. Well, at any rate, Slim was one person severance from whom would cause no sorrow in this new life she was entering upon. . . .

At about the time Jennie was thinking of the Pekin, Uncle George entered that smoke-clouded establishment. His old eyes noted a change or two, and then, catching Jerry's attention and followed by him, he stepped on back into Black Jerry's office. The door closed behind the two, shutting out the dance-music, and they sat down.

"I see you got a new guy out there instead of Slim Jackson," said Uncle George. "What's happened to Slim?"

"Told me to-day he just had a swell opening in vaudeville. Said he had to grab it quick or lose the chance. So I let him go."

"Is he going to be teamed up with that Daisy White?"

"I don't know. The main thing he said was that he sure was going to make a hit."

"Mebbe he will, Jerry — mebbe he will." Uncle George nodded. "He's clever, that guy, and if he gets agoing he'll never have to slow down his pace because he's carrying a lot of heavy scruples. Almost anything may happen to him."

"I ain't interested in what happens to him," Jerry said impatiently. "I want to know what's happened to Jennie."

So Uncle George told about Braithewood Hall and leaving Jennie there.

"Do you think she can put it across in a swell joint like that?"

"I think she can, Jerry."

"Well, then" — with suppressed gloating — "she's really got her big chance!"

"Yes, she's really got her big chance. We've done our job, Jerry. We're through — you and me."

And then Uncle George amended a previous remark. "She'll put it across, Jerry, provided you stick to your promise to keep out of her life."

"Oh, I'll keep out of her life all right." And then he added grimly: "That is, unless some one tries to put something over on her."

"Sure, Jerry, in which case we'll all be heard from."

The two fell silent. And while Jennie lay excitedly visioning her new life, the two men who had brought her into it, unmoral, affectionate men — in this case high-minded and natural and consistent according to

their own standards — the two sat gazing fixedly across the little table into the other's set face: — and behind the dark, masklike face of Black Jerry, deep down in the heart which the world believed had no existence, there throbbed infinite loss and infinite exultation.



## CHAPTER VIII

### JENNIE SHAPES HER FUTURE

**W**HEN Jennie awoke the next morning, she was for several moments as a person of lost memory cast ashore upon an unknown land. Not till she had gazed around the large blue-and-white room and over at Sue's honey-colored hair on the pillow in the near-by bed, did she recall what had happened to her and where she was.

She felt dizzy with the responsibility of her position: so much danger behind her — so much that was unknown before her — herself so ignorant of even the commonplaces of this new world.

It was now all up to her — up to her alone! She lay there, carefully thinking her way forward, shrewdly planning her course. For the present she would be very quiet, would remain in the inconspicuous background; she would unassumingly accept the rôle of that untaught girl she was here supposed to be. If she was that girl, frankly and seemingly without aspirations, the fewer questions would be asked her, the less hostility would be roused. Her first efforts would be merely to get herself accepted by slow degrees. But later on, she was going to be somebody here! She would do it somehow! For this was the way up.

Presently the rising gong sounded. Sue awoke and rubbed the last of the soft sleep from her eyes. Rolling over, she saw a dark-eyed girl in the next bed who seemed to her lonely and very apprehensive.

"Everything is going to be all right, Jennie," she said cheerily. "Just you don't be afraid."

"I'll try not to," Jennie replied diffidently — keenly trying to study her room-mate.

Sue thought a moment; she recalled how limited was Jennie's wardrobe. "I say, Jennie, you told me last night you were going shopping in a few days. We're about the same size, and I've no end of things; I wish you'd wear 'em till you get a chance to buy your own."

Jennie hesitated an instant. Her present clothes were not only pitifully inadequate for, but strikingly discordant in, such surroundings as these — and Jennie, even if she had had few of them, loved pretty clothes. But her shrewd wit prompted her to a decision in keeping with the plan she had just made for herself.

"You're awfully good, Sue — but, no, thank you," she said, and got into the plain dress which had provoked Gloria's sarcasm the night before.

After breakfast she was summoned by Miss Gresham into the study where she and Uncle George had been received. Miss Gresham briefly examined Jennie, assigned her courses for the first half-year, then said in her carefully modulated voice:

"Jennie, I have arranged for Miss Van der Brunt, the social director of the school, to motor into New York with you after an early luncheon to-day and help select the new outfit your guardian desired purchased for you."

"If you don't mind, Miss Gresham," said Jennie, "I'd like to wait for a few days."

Miss Gresham raised her handsome eyebrows. In her experience it was something distinctly out of the ordinary for a girl to avoid new clothes.

"Why, Jennie?"

"If you please, it was a long trip here, and I'm rather tired," replied Jennie.

"Just as you like," said Miss Gresham.

And so Jennie went about in her old clothes — not altogether pleased with them, but having the approval of her shrewd, patient plan. Better to be laughed at for her crudity and ignorance than sneered at for being a climber. The change must be made so gradually that it would attract no attention. She could afford to wait.

For the first day or two in this wonderful school, beneath the quiet, retiring manner which she showed her mates, her every nerve was stretched to tightest suspense. For all her decision, the present, the future, existed for her only in terms of pressing and constantly iterated questions — the same questions that had risen in her when she had rolled hither with Uncle George. What was life here really going to be? Could she really make good in such a place? Would the police trace her? Would she, despite her guard upon herself, thoughtlessly commit some error which might lead to her betrayal?

On her second day at Braithewood Hall this thoughtlessness overtook her. She had gone in bathing in a suit borrowed from Sue Harrison; in these sheltered waters of Long Island Sound the water continued warm enough for bathing throughout October. Conscious of nothing but the animal delight of being in the water, away she went with a racing stroke, white arms swiftly flashing, her face deep in the water, out around the float and back to the bathing-pier. On the pier a group of girls in bathing dress were gazing at her in surprise. It was Gloria Raymond who spoke for them.

"I say, you there," she drawled, "did you learn that crawl out on the deserts of Wyoming?"

For a moment Jennie was all consternation: had she by her indiscretion opened the way for her exposure — and the coming of Casey? She hid her dismay under the business of wringing out her skirt; then she said calmly:

"It was n't really a desert where I came from. There was a river, and my uncle taught me to swim."

She saw that, though still surprised, they believed her. The tense moment passed, and she breathed easier. What if these fine young ladies really knew the truth: that she had learned to swim in the enclosed public baths which are tied up against the city docks during summer time, that she had been something of a star in these common places — that Black Jerry, who loved the water and was a mighty swimmer, had for years past taken her once or twice a week on slack summer afternoons down to Coney Island or Brighton Beach?

But after the first few days had passed and no police had come, the fear of outside interference began to subside in Jennie. As for her possible betraying blunders, reason began to quiet her on that point. She reminded herself that she was expected to make mistakes — she decided it was in keeping with her character to make them, and perhaps make a few consciously; and so when she did make real blunders she was not greatly discomfited. She bore in mind one sage injunction of Uncle George: "When in doubt about what to do, wait and watch what the other girl does with her fork." She was constantly watching what the other girl did with her "fork." She noted everything — she remembered it — and one at a time, she made little changes.

After a week Jennie consented to a shopping expedi-

tion in New York with the very erect Miss Van der Brunt. Even then she chose only the fewest and simplest things possible — though it hurt her to give up the pretty garments that might have been hers by merely saying yes. In this procedure she was guided not only by her own decision to play down to her part, but by the canny realization that she did not yet know, of her own knowledge, what a girl in her station should wear; if she bought much now, even under the guidance of Miss Van der Brunt, most of her purchases would have to be kept discreetly in reserve, or else go into the discard. She would wait and watch; and when she bought she would buy what was right.

Miss Van der Brunt, unaccustomed to such restraint in her charges, was amazed; she thought Jennie penurious and tried to urge the purchase of what seemed to her necessities — but Jennie, in her quiet manner, kept to her decision. Later on, the correct, unimaginative taste of Miss Van der Brunt was to help Jennie greatly in avoiding what was spurious or pretentious, or out-of-date, or too daringly anticipatory of the fashion — though it was never to help her in the final selection of those things which seemed a part of her individuality.

The academic work at Braithewood Hall Jennie found easy, after the tasks to which her public school life had accustomed her. But she was bewildered by some of the other courses which were essentials of her education. There was M. Dubois, who gave the Metropolitan Opera House as his address, a fussy, voluble gentleman of frenzied gestures, who came out three times a week to give them lessons in classical and æsthetic dancing, also the ballet. There was Miss Van der Brunt (of a very old New York family indeed) who



drilled them in how to start and keep in motion a polite conversation; who rehearsed them in how to enter a drawing-room, how to take a gentleman's arm in going in to dinner, how to say good-bye to a hostess. And then every Friday afternoon Miss Gresham "received" in her study, where tea was served with all the details of propriety, and where all the formalities were observed that obtained in the grown-up life that lay a few years ahead.

And once a fortnight a formal dinner was served, complete, if not in regard to actual food, at least in regard to appurtenances. The dozen pieces of silver at her place at first had Jennie confused; here, indeed, was real necessity for the literal following of that figurative injunction about waiting to see what the other girl did with her fork.

In these matters also Jennie did her best — rather, as far as actual performance went, a little less than her best. To learn such things was what she was here for. But in the midst of these august ceremonials Jennie would sometimes think of her father, and within herself she would smile at what would be the amazement of Black Jerry and her old friends at the Pekin, could they only behold these maneuvers and her soberly taking a part in them.

Of all these "cultural branches" she cared most for the work of the dancing master and the vocal teacher. But here, too, she tried to hold herself back — and when the joy of dancing made her forget and she let herself out and surprised the little dancing-master, she immediately counteracted it with a display of awkwardness and stupidity that sent the little man into one of his worst fits of artistic frenzy. She pursued the same course

with the vocal master. By both despairing teachers she was considered a mediocrity gifted with streaks of undependable and undeveloped talent — “but impossible — altogether impossible!” But from both — and both knew their business — Jennie, despite appearances, absorbed every point.

Weeks passed, and months, and Jennie, watching everything, with a growing sense of security, fitted more and more into the routine of the school. Most of the girls paid little heed to Jennie — they were too much engrossed with themselves, with their chums, with sports, and quite incidentally with their school work. And when they did giggle a bit at her, or were superior, or snubbed her, she gave no sign and tried not to care.

From that first evening in the dining-room she knew that Gloria Raymond was to be unchangeably hostile. Jennie had early sensed that Gloria held the somewhat anomalous position of being the most autocratic, the most sought-after, girl in the school — and secretly the girl most feared and most hated.

It was Gloria who made her most strikingly forget her meek rôle, and who started her upward out of her self-enjoined obscurity. One February day in the squash court during a match between Sue and Gloria, both in white sweaters and knickerbockers, there was a dispute over a point in which the usually yielding Sue doggedly maintained that she was right. Gloria's temper mounted into swift flame, and she called Sue a liar. Jennie, the only onlooker and a perfunctory onlooker at that, knew nothing about squash, but she was fully acquainted with the word “liar” and what people did at the sound of that word. Instantly and instinctively she sprang before Gloria, her black eyes gleaming.

"You take that back!" she cried.

"I'll take nothing back!" snapped Gloria, at first not noting who Sue's champion was. And then as she saw, she added in a drawl that was vibrant with anger, "Hello, if it is n't that Wyoming runt!"

"You take back what you said about Sue!" repeated Jennie.

For answer Gloria's right hand shot out furiously. Jennie was slighter and half a head shorter, but she had fought since she was a child, and in her later years she and Harry Edwards had scuffled good-naturedly, and he had shown her many tricks of the wrestling game of which he was a devotee. Jennie caught Gloria's wrist before the darting, clawlike hand could reach her face, gave the arm a sharp twist and tripped her opponent — and the rest of what happened happened so quickly that it seemed to have only beginning and end. There was Gloria lying on her back on the floor, and on her proud body sat Jennie, holding each wrist in a grip so clever that all the other's writhing could not avail to break it; in fact so cunning were the twisting grips that Gloria's struggles served only to start excruciating pains to shoot through elbows and shoulders — with the result that she subsided, gasping.

"Let me up!" she demanded.

"I will just as soon as you have apologized to Sue."

"I'll not do it!"

"All right. I guess I can stand this as long as you can."

"If you don't let me up," fumed Gloria, "I'll call for help — and then you'll see the trouble you'll get in!"

"Please call," Jennie urged tauntingly. "Don't hold back because of worry over the trouble I'd get in. Call! — I'm sure all the girls would just love to run

in and see what's here — and it would be something for them to talk about all the while you're in school and for years afterwards — the wild runt from Wyoming sitting on the elegant Miss Gloria Raymond's stomach. So please do cry out, there's a dear."

Gloria was consumed with fury. But she realized she dared not carry out her threat. She was helpless.

"What do you want?" she demanded huskily.

"Just say, 'Sue, I was wrong, and I'm sorry I called you what I did.'"

Gloria glared and choked for a moment. But in a husky voice she repeated the sentence.

"And now say, 'Sue, I promise I'll never do anything of the sort again.'"

That, likewise, Gloria repeated. Jennie promptly released her, and Gloria struggled to her feet.

"I don't ask you to promise this, Gloria dear," Jennie went on, "for it's a promise you probably can't keep — but in spite of who you are, just try to be as much of a lady as you can."

Gloria trembled all over, her face was a dull scarlet, her eyes glowered with a malignant fire, but she choked impotently. Without speaking, she turned abruptly and hurried out of the squash court.

Sue, who had stood stupefied during this swift clash of instincts that were supposed to have been eradicated generations before one came into the refined atmosphere of Braithewood Hall, now came to life.

"Jennie!" she breathed. "Jennie!"

"I wish dad could have seen that!" exclaimed Jennie: — and the sight of those two figures in their respective positions might indeed have given grim joy to Black Jerry.

"Your father, Jennie? I thought your father was dead."

Jennie quickly rectified the slip. "I sometimes call my guardian dad."

"But, Jennie," Sue cried, "Gloria will never forget that — she'll hate you all her life! And there's nothing she won't do!"

"Let her go to it — I'm not afraid of her!" Jennie returned defiantly. And then she remembered that she had not played her rôle as she had written it for herself; she was suddenly contrite and was the mild, unassuming person she had created.

"I'm awfully sorry, Sue," she said with her best humility. "I forgot myself — I am terribly crude — I don't know at all how to behave myself."

"It was wonderful, Jennie!" Sue kissed her impulsively. "And Gloria was trying to cheat. Only — I guess we'd better say nothing about it."

"I'll not," replied Jennie.

And they did not, and it is to be presumed that Gloria was at no pains to publish the incident. But in the close community of a girls' school secrets seem not to require the medium of words; they seem to have ways known only to themselves for escaping the confinement of human silence. And so the encounter in the squash-court house did come to be talked about — in whispered privacy; but never directly to Jennie and never directly to Gloria. The latter was accorded the same deference as before and allowed the same domination — which may or may not be a commentary on the human species; but thereafter Jennie began to receive little attentions from the other girls, never in the open and never marked. From this time there began a



subtle change in the attitude toward her that was to grow; it was from this time she began slowly to be somebody.

But as the months passed, there was not a day that she did not think of her father and her Aunt Mary — of all the people who belonged to the world which she had left; not a day that in her there were not deep yearnings to see them. The one thing of her present life that she did not like was the thing which was its very foundation — that she was not to see her father again. Nor Aunt Mary. Nor — nor Harry Edwards. In those night hours when she lay yearningly awake, looking back upon the people of her past, she wondered if the parting really had to be forever — or if there might come some unguessable twist of affairs, as great as that which had landed her here, which would sometime, somehow, bring her life again in touch with those whom she had left.

In her lived two great desires: to reach forward and grasp whatever prizes might develop in the vague, rainbowed future — to reach back and hold tight to a few persons of the past.

In her wondering over the plans she had so carefully laid, she gave shrewd consideration to every element which might influence her career. To every element except one, and of that she did not think at all: that element was the unknown person who existed in her even then — existed germinally — for in most of us our real selves lie deep hidden, and many of us go on to the end without the seed sending forth its first sprout, without our guessing who we really are.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD

THE long and lonely Christmas vacation Jennie had spent at Braithewood Hall. But in March there came a cordial letter from Sue's mother asking her to spend the Easter holidays as Sue's guest. Sue was happily importunate. For several days Jennie wavered between desire and fear: could she carry herself through the new experience of such a visit? But she saw the visit as another rung in her cautious upward climb, and in the end she decided to go. She would be that unpretentious, frankly unfinished girl from the West who knew nothing. That attitude had saved her thus far; it might save her in this new adventure she was entering upon.

At the close of a March day the Harrison car discharged the two girls before one of a row of graystone houses off Fifth Avenue. Jennie followed Sue in with a palpitant sense that this was the beginning of another phase of her new life — though she then had no premonition of how important this new phase was to be. The interior of the house seemed to her unbelievably spacious and splendid; having no experience by which to form her critical judgment, she had the swift, vague impression that this house was an individualized expression, for a few, of those things which Miss Gresham's school expressed for many.

Almost at once Sue was being embraced by her mother. With her quick eyes Jennie studied this important factor in her new situation. Mrs. Harrison

seemed to her very much like Sue: considerate, and not very discerning. Physically, she was of that blonde type which seems to mature but not to age.

Mrs. Harrison, turning, gave Jennie her hand and kissed her. "I'm so glad you could come," she said warmly. "Sue has talked about you every time I've seen her, and written about you in every letter, since school opened."

Jennie plunged boldly. "Then Sue's told you what a regular barbarian I am," she said with her air of naïve frankness.

"She's told me you are very modest, but that for all your modesty you are very clever." The essence of Mrs. Harrison's nature was an unhesitating kindness. "The other things, they are just superficialities that you'll easily learn if you have n't already done so. I'd not worry about them."

"You are very good, Mrs. Harrison."

Mrs. Harrison kissed her again. "And now, Sue, you and Jennie had better go up to your rooms. By the time you're unpacked and dressed, dinner will be served."

"Is n't mother just a wonderful dear!" Sue exclaimed a minute later in Jennie's bedroom which connected with her own.

"That's not half what she is, Sue. You don't know how lucky you are; I hardly remember ever having had a mother."

"You'll like my father, too. And maybe you'll like Kenneth — if he does n't show that he thinks he's too awfully grown up."

An hour later, in the drawing-room, Jennie was being introduced to Mr. Harrison and then to his son. The

father had a pleasant face when he smiled; but the moment the occasion for the smile was gone, his attention went automatically to what lay within his mind, and the observant Jennie noted that his face took on that set, masklike, rather heavy look, which she had noted as a common characteristic of the pictures she had seen in magazines and newspapers of the men who manage large affairs. Kenneth Harrison was a slender young fellow of twenty-five, an amused smile of good-natured worldliness on his pale face, grace and self-possession in all his movements. He seemed to Jennie quite the handsomest young man she had ever met. She would have been sorely embarrassed but for the perfect ease with which he carried off the introduction and their first sentences.

At the table Jennie was seated between Mr. Harrison and Kenneth. Never before had she been at such a family dinner; and never before had she sat with a gentleman in evening clothes at either elbow, a situation that was made more difficult by both being strangers. She summoned her resources for the ordeal. But after all, there was not much actual strain put upon her. When she was addressed and the talk seemed to be leading her into difficulties, Mrs. Harrison was instantly coming to her aid with gracious tact and humor. And then most of the conversation was between Kenneth and Sue, and consisted mainly of a brother's privileged raillery at his younger sister. He seemed very clever to Jennie; but she plainly saw that he regarded Sue with amused superiority as only a schoolgirl. And for all his courteous attention to her own self, she was aware that to him she was only that most negligible of creatures, the school friend of a half-grown sister:

so vast is the abyss between twenty-five in the male and sixteen in the other sex, when sixteen is still in school and wears its skirts an inch or so short of womanhood.

Directly after dinner Kenneth left the house. "I'll bet he's gone over to see Gloria Raymond," whispered Sue. "I wish he could be married to her for about a year, and then it could all be wiped out."

"Why?"

"He's such a fool about her and he's so stuck on himself," replied Sue with a sister's candor. "I think a year of Gloria might help him a lot."

"What does he do?"

"He's in business with my father. He thinks he's a very clever business man, and I guess he is, too. And another thing he does is to go to the theater. He hardly ever misses a first night and I guess he knows every actor and actress who's at all prominent."

"He does seem to know how to get on with people very well," remarked Jennie.

"He certainly does, and he knows it, and he counts on it. That's what makes him so sure of himself — that's why you wish his foot would slip and he'd fall."

Despite Sue's sisterly criticisms, Jennie thought him wonderfully attractive. A pleasant home evening followed, and after Jennie was in bed and the lights were out, and she lay going over accounts, she decided with thrilling satisfaction that she had borne herself very well. She was indeed on her way up! Here she was, now a welcome guest in this splendid home; six months before, down at the Pekin —

But as her mind went back to the Pekin she thought of her father, and the longing to see him, which so often



had risen in her at Braithewood Hall, surged poignantly upon her once more. To be sure, Uncle George had said she and her father must not see each other again; to be sure, a meeting would be dangerous — but she wanted to see him! — merely to see him! Could it possibly be managed while she was in the city? Surely she could manage it somehow! Excitement, desire, ran high. She slipped eagerly out of bed — hesitated — then crept back in again. Reason had out-argued desire. It was too dangerous. Her whole future, opening so splendidly, would be risked, might be ruined, by such an attempt.

But though reason had put down desire, yet even when she was not actively thinking of it, desire persisted in her subconscious mind.

The next afternoon — it was a Saturday — she and Sue and Mrs. Harrison, attended by the agreeably tolerant Kenneth, went forth upon a small foraging expedition among Fifth Avenue shops. Jennie was in a tailored suit, part of her later purchases chosen with the aid of that estimable adviser, Miss Van der Brunt, and a glance she caught from Mrs. Harrison gave her the gratifying sensation that her company found no fault with her appearance.

They had left the car at the curb to follow along, and had been in and out of half a dozen shops, and were proceeding on foot to another half a block farther down the street, when all at once her heart went dizzily still: there was Harry Edwards walking up the Avenue toward them. She saw he had not yet seen her, and she turned swiftly and began to talk rapidly to Kenneth Harrison. But as they passed she was conscious that Harry had stopped short and was gazing at her. With-

out conscious thought, she acted upon the instant. She dropped her purse, walked on for a dozen paces, then said, "Oh, excuse me," and turned and walked back. Harry had picked up her purse and was staring at her in utter bewilderment.

"My God, Jennie!" he gasped as she came up. "What does this mean?"

"Don't give me away!" she breathed sharply.

"But I was told you had run off! And here I find you at home among such people — and in such clothes!"

"No time to explain," she whispered rapidly. "Don't give me away!"

"I'll not, Jennie. But Jennie — please! — can't I have a chance to see you?"

It was her subconscious self that spoke — her long-controlled yearning. "Tell dad I'll try to be home to-night sometime after midnight," she whispered. And then, taking her purse from his hands, "Thank you very much," she said aloud in her natural voice.

She rejoined the others. "I dropped my purse," she explained.

"So I saw," said Kenneth. "And here's something just a bit odd: the fellow that picked it up is one of the men in our office. Edwards is his name. Rather a clever chap, I believe."

She perceived that they had seen nothing more than that her purse had been returned to her. She felt relieved.

But nevertheless the rest of that afternoon, and all that evening, were trying to her — her imagination was constantly leaping feverishly ahead; but she kept close watch upon herself, and she managed to seem the diffident, rather self-conscious schoolgirl suffering from

nothing else than the occasional and minor embarrassments natural in a first visit. At eleven she went to bed and lay tensely in the darkness until after twelve, when she calculated that all the household was asleep. She slipped out and crept into Sue's room and secured Sue's latch-key from the dresser where she had marked that Sue had placed it. Then she dressed in the dark — she had carefully laid out her clothes for this — and crept cautiously downstairs and out the front door. In the deep-shadowed vestibule she halted and peered out. Fortune was with her. The private watchman who patrolled the block had passed the house and was proceeding, slow and heavy-footed, toward the west, and there was no one else in the street. She drew her veil down to her nose, buried her face up to the nose in her fur boa, and stepped quickly forth and walked rapidly, but without appearance of haste, toward the east, turning south at the first corner.

Taking a Madison Avenue surface car, she rode to Forty-second Street, changed there to the Subway, got out at Fourteenth Street, and walked southward. Fear constantly clutched at her, but her danger was not so great as she thought; her face was practically hidden, and the hour was one at which most devotees of late pleasure had settled down in their place of last call, and there was practically no one in the streets who might recognize her.

At last she came into her old neighborhood — the neighborhood that had been home to her until six months before. Her heart beat higher still, and now not so much from fear. She paused and stepped into a doorway. She knew the posts of the policemen down here, and she waited until she saw that the officer stationed

nearest the Pekin was at the farther end of his beat; then she hurried on and approached her old home. Fortune again favored her. No one was entering or leaving the Pekin.

She slipped into the passage and glided along it. But she halted at the side door; within, the two-piece orchestra was playing, there was dancing and laughing — the old familiar sounds of her childhood, the tonal background of her life. Then she crept upstairs, and very gently she turned the knob. The door was unlocked and swung open, and there sat her father, her aunt, and Harry Edwards.

She halted an instant, her breath coming quick, and gazed at her father. Black Jerry rose at sight of her. His dark face twitched a trifle and his big chest filled. Then he held out his hand.

"Howdy, Jennie," he said gruffly. "But what the hell —"

"Dad!" she cried, and sprang forward and threw her arms about his neck. Instantly he strained her to him. "Jennie!" he breathed — "Jennie!"

After a moment he let her go and she embraced and kissed her aunt and shook hands with Harry.

"But what you mean, coming down here?" Jerry demanded.

"I just had to see you, dad."

He swallowed at that. "Well, I'm glad to see you, Jennie."

Pride swelled within him as he now took her in more fully; something like awe came into his manner. "You certainly look like you been making good, Jennie. You certainly do look the class. Tell us what it was like."

They sat down and she told them about Braithewood

Hall — about her plan for her own behavior which was to carry her upwards — about Sue and the Harrisons; and all the while Harry Edwards's eyes were on her meditatively, hungrily — in pain and doubt and determination. And then she asked about things here at home, and then she asked Harry about himself.

"I'm getting on fine," he declared. "Remember what you said about Sam Conway — about his being a crooked politician who never helped anybody unless he expected to collect about five hundred per cent on the deal sometime? Well, I know now you were just about five hundred per cent wrong. On the office stationery Sam does n't figure as anybody in the Harrison firm, but when it comes to real business he's somebody big, all right. And he's solidly behind me, and he's pushing me along; he's my friend and he's going to see that I get on."

Jennie enjoyed this relaxation from the rigidities of good form, after having been for six months so industriously and carefully a lady. "And so, Harry," she said tauntingly, "because you've got a friend to push you, I suppose you're leaning back with your feet crossed and are n't trying."

"I'm trying harder than any man in the firm!" he bristled.

"There's your answer, my child. If you're getting on it's because you're trying. And what I said about Sam Conway still stands; if he does help you, you'll get a little bill for it some day. But let's avoid trouble and change the subject. Who picks your neckties now, Harry?"

"I guess this necktie is all right!"

"I'm glad to hear it," she said solicitously, "for it



does n't look at all well. Looks as though you ought to give it something to reduce its fever. What's the matter with it, Harry — smallpox, scarlet fever, or just a nervous breakdown?"

"It's as good as that young Harrison had on this afternoon!" he flung at her.

"Is it? Then that young Harrison was exposed to and probably caught a very serious sickness this afternoon — poor fellow."

"From the way he was looking at you, it was easy enough to guess what sickness the poor fellow was catching," Harry retorted meaningly.

Her eyes grew sharp. "Oh, I see what you're insinuating. I had n't thought of that before. So you're jealous, are you?"

He spoke doggedly, defiantly. "Well, I'm going to marry you some day — you just remember that. And in the meantime I don't want any man to make a fool of you."

"You think he could make a fool of me?" she asked with a provokingly cool smile. "I'm not so sure he could. It might be the other way around. Anyhow, it's a fine idea you've put in my head. I'll think it over. Thanks. And if I ever do work it out, Harry, you'll sure be adequately remembered."

He grew red, and swallowed hard. "I'd like to be your teacher for just about five full-sized minutes in a school where corporal punishment had n't been abolished!"

"I say, you two lay off each other!" ordered Black Jerry. "Can't you ever see each other without starting a dog-fight!"

Her teasing manner vanished. "I'm sorry, dad —

I'm sorry, Harry. I never saw Kenneth Harrison until yesterday. As for him, he has n't seen me at all yet. I'm not worth bothering to look at — just a shy little schoolgirl. Let's see what it really is that's wrong with that necktie, Harry — the poor thing!"

She fussed for a moment with the tie, then her head darting forward aimed a kiss at his cheek which skidded and ran off on to one of his ears. Before he could move she had sprung behind her father with a laughing "Save me, dad — save me!" The next moment he was after her with a free, boyish shout, but she eluded him, pivoting about her father, laughing provokingly at him all the while.

"Here, can that stuff!" protested Black Jerry. "You two toughs are making too much noise!"

But for a moment longer she laughed at Harry, and he made futile lunges at her. And then a voice spoke from across the room:

"Hello, Jerry. What's up?"

They all wheeled sharply about, except Jennie who at that instant was behind her father. The door was open and in it stood a man with heavy face and flat feet, holding a derby hat in one hand and a half-smoked cigar in the other.

"Casey!" ejaculated Black Jerry.

"Sure. Don't I look like my picture?" said the plain-clothes man good-naturedly.

"What are you doing here?"

"Friendly call. Dropped in to your joint to say how's your liver to-night and was told you were up here. I knocked — no one answered — the door was unlocked — I walked right in. Why, ain't you glad to see me, Jerry?"

The four looked at him in strained silence. Then the apparently slow eyes of the detective caught the skirt flaring behind Jerry's knees. His face went loose with amazement.

"Jennie!" he exclaimed. "By God — Jennie Malone!"

And then his eyes grew bright with professional keenness.

## CHAPTER X

### THE FACE OF DISASTER

CASEY closed the door and without a word crossed the room. Jennie, suddenly sick, did not try to evade him — she knew such effort to be of no avail. And when he had come around her father, her dark eyes looked straight into his — and she stood tense, nerveless.

“Jennie!” Casey ejaculated again, still amazed. “If it ain’t Jennie.” He stared for a moment, silent. “Jennie, come back! — and dressed like a queen! What’s the play?”

Suddenly, from a drawer in the table, Jerry drew a short black pistol and shoved it hard into the officer’s stomach. “Here’s the play, Casey,” gritted Jerry. “You try to start anything about Jennie — you try to take my Jennie — and this gun goes off!”

Casey turned his gaze from daughter to father. His heavy face still bore signs of his astonishment, but otherwise it was unperturbed.

“I don’t know what this kid has been doing, Jerry,” he said evenly — “but whatever it’s been, it’ll only make the case worse for her if that gun should go off. Forgery and jumping her bail is all I got against her now. If a little murder is thrown in, it’ll only make things that much harder for her — not to mention what’ll happen to you, Jerry — and somebody’ll get her just the same. Just let all that soak in a little while, Jerry, before you lean too heavy against that trigger.”

Jerry’s dark eyes blazed fiercely into the officer’s. A

minute passed. Then Casey remarked in his same even tone, "Guess you'd better let me have that gat, Jerry," and reaching down he took the pistol from Jerry's unresisting hand, and laid it on top of the piano. When he turned back it was to gaze at Jennie.

"Well, kid, it looks like I got you again. I certainly did get it rough on the last deal — what from that judge roasting me — and the Chief giving it to me — and the boys at Headquarters giving me the grand laugh because a girl had put one over on me. But before I take you along with me, Jennie, I'd like to know what you been doing the last six months. It's something big, you bet: six months ago you looked like 'most any girl around here — now you look like a million dollars. What's been the game?"

"It's none of your damned business!" growled Jerry. "Go ahead with your pinch!"

"Oh, yes, it is some of my business," the even voice of Casey returned. "And you might as well hand it to me now, for you know it's going to come out anyhow. Take your time, if you want to. I can wait till you loosen up. And while I wait I'll just give my feet a little time off duty."

He sat down heavily and crossed his feet. Jerry glowered at him, then he gazed at Jennie with a look of grim futility. She was dizzy with fear: more so than that other time Casey had walked into her life, for she had more to lose — far, far more. And it was lost, all lost! — she had a gasping sense of falling swiftly from a great height — and with it a more poignant sense of being haled before a great shame.

All were silent. Then one by one they sat down. And presently Black Jerry began to speak, roughly,



defiantly, briefly at first — then more fully: and while he spoke Casey crossed and recrossed his broad policeman's feet. Jerry told all: how, seeing that Jennie was going crooked down here and seeing that his name would always be a drag on her he and Uncle George had evolved the plan to give her a chance; told about Braithewood Hall; told of Jennie's visit to the Harrisons.

Casey blinked when the story was done. "God, what a pinch!" he breathed. "And what a story for the papers: the daughter of Black Jerry — that swell school — visiting the Harrisons! It's a peach!"

"Sure — it's a peach for you!" growled Jerry. "Every paper in town'll have your name in it big for the next few days, and so'll the papers all through the country. And you coppers, you hate publicity just like you hate a shot of whiskey on a cold night!"

"And you done it all just to give the kid a chance?" demanded Casey.

"Ain't I told you that already! What else would I do it for? And she was making good, too — only she pulled that bone of coming down here."

"What did you come down here for, Jennie?"

"I — I just wanted to see dad," she answered.

"Aw, cut out the questions!" snapped Jerry. "We're ready — go ahead and make your pinch!"

Casey crossed his legs, nursed another large unlovely foot, and sucked deeply at his tobacco. Then he gazed steadily at his cigar which was now a stub so far gone that it could be held only by pinching it with his nails. Then he turned to Harry.

"You there, Edwards," he said, "we all know you're thinking that a young guy that's got a job waiting him in the morning ought to have been in bed long ago. So

though we're sorry you gotta go, we'll all say good-night."

Harry started. "I don't understand, Casey."

"Don't you? I thought what I said was simple. I said good-night."

Harry looked at Black Jerry. Jerry did not understand either, but he nodded. Harry stood up, hesitated, went to the door, halted there.

"If you need me, Jennie, you can count on me to the limit!" he stammered. "I guess that's all, except — except good-night."

"Good-night," she whispered — and the door closed behind him.

Casey turned to Jennie's aunt. "I'm sure you ought to be in bed, too. Good-night, ma'am."

Bewildered, rather frightened, Aunt Mary rose, clung to Jennie in a tight kiss, then passed into her bedroom.

"A capacity house is a swell thing for a regular show," remarked Casey, "but it sure does n't help this kind of a play."

"This kind of play?" demanded Jerry. "What you driving at, Casey?"

"The less them two knows," Casey went on, "the less lies they may ever have to tell. The fewer we got in the cast, the less chance of trouble busting out among the actors."

"I don't make you at all, Casey," Black Jerry declared.

"No? It's like this: you tried to give your kid a chance. Well, I'm willing to give the kid a chance, too — provided I can keep myself protected."

Jennie caught a sharp breath. Was her lost world spinning back to her?

"Protected — how?" exclaimed Jerry.

"First, the kid has got to make a clean get-away. Back to those Harrison people. And she's got to manage it so no one ever knows."

"Yes. What then?" asked Jerry.

"Second, I can't afford to have any one else ever pinch her. It would show me up something rotten — I'd get roasted worse than ever. You understand? If she's ever arrested, I'm the guy that's got to make the pinch. See?"

He turned to Jennie. "I know now where you are, and I'll always keep an eye in your direction. But I want you to promise me, if ever you see that things are going bad for you, and are about to go all bloo-ey, that you'll get me quick word, so I can beat any other guy to the pinch."

In a bare whisper Jennie promised.

"And now for to-night's get-away. You go back the same way you came. Me, you might as well know I'll be tailing you all the time — and if any trouble happens to you, why, I gotta jump in and identify you and say I'd been tailing you and put you under arrest. That's gotta be understood — you gotta be ready for it."

"I understand — I'll be ready," Jennie whispered.

Black Jerry had drawn from a pocket a big roll of bills. "Casey," he said huskily, "you sure are a white man and —"

"Damn you, Black Jerry!" roared the other. "What kind of a guy do you think I am?"

"Why, Casey, I thought —"

"You stick that dough back in your pants, or I call all bets off!" And then in his even voice again: "How-

ever, Jerry, I might be approached by the offer of a good cigar, if you've got one that was n't raised by them Eyetalian truck-farmers out on Long Island."

He took the three cigars Jerry thrust upon him, stowed two carefully away, lit one from his fast-expiring stub, and made for the door. There he paused.

"Better move along quick," he said to Jennie. "And say, kid, I hope you win out — to-night and in the years ahead. I hope you make good on your big chance. But remember — I gotta always be on the job ready to nab you when you make your first slip. Good-night, and I hope I never speak to you again. So-long, Jerry."

When Casey had gone, Black Jerry gripped Jennie's shoulders with fingers that sunk deep in his tensity. "God, that was a close one! Don't you ever come down again! Understand? Don't you ever come here again!"

"I won't, dad! Never!"

"It's a big chance you got and I don't want you to lose any part of it." His dark face took on the grim set of that October night when Uncle George had proposed this plan, only now there was also exultation in the look. "It's already working out the way Uncle George and me thought — you're already getting to be somebody. I want you to do your best to make good! You'll do that, Jennie?"

"I'll do my best, dad!"

"You've already done a lot!" His eyes gloated proudly over her trim figure. "A little while longer and you'll really be way above my class — but that's what I counted on, Jennie. But don't you ever come down here again!"

He caught her suddenly to him, then thrust her almost roughly through the door and closed it behind her. She

stood there in the dark for a moment, her soul torn and throbbing with emotions. Then she remembered what lay ahead, what would certainly accompany any slightest misadventure. She adjusted her veil, muffled her face in her boa, and slipped cautiously down — past the doorway whence issued the old familiar hilarity — out into the night and away. She was conscious of the hovering presence of Casey, and twice she glimpsed him. There was not a moment that fear was not clutching at her, menacing her.

But yet again fortune seemed to favor her, and she came at last to the Harrisons' street. She paused and peered around the corner; the night watchman was not in sight, so she hurried for the Harrisons' door. Then fortune, which had been her friend so long, suddenly deserted her. As she started up the stoop she heard a voice call, "One moment, miss!" and she saw the bulky private watchman bearing down upon her. She had a frantic impulse to run; but that course she instantly recognized would be fatal. So she halted. She looked quickly back in the direction whence she had come. Approaching was a shadowy figure which she knew to be Casey.

Something clicked in the watchman's hand, and a tiny light flashed into Jennie's face. "If you don't mind, please lift your mouth out of that there fur," the watchman said politely, but firmly.

Jennie could but obey. She saw Casey draw nearer.

"U'm, I thought so," remarked the watchman. "Excuse me, miss, but you don't live here, do you?"

"I'm visiting the Harrisons."

"That may be so, miss, but I know all the Harrisons and all their servants. And I never seen you before."



"But I'm visiting here!" she protested. "And I've got a latch-key!"

"That may be so, miss" — very respectfully — "but they's been a lot o' clever burglaries pulled off in this neighborhood, and I don't dare take no risks."

"You mean you don't believe me?" she breathed.

"I ain't saying that, miss; I'm just saying I don't dare take no risks. A clever lady-crook might have a latch-key — she probably would — and she'd have ready just such a story as yours."

Jennie realized that he did not believe a word she had said, that his politeness was merely to protect him in the event of the hundredth chance that it should turn out she had spoken truly. And she saw that Casey had moved to within a dozen feet, and had halted under pretense of fumbling for a match.

"But ring the bell!" she cried desperately. "They can identify me!"

"Excuse me — but a lot o' these robberies is partly inside cases. The person that answered the bell might be the very one that furnished you the latch-key, and of course the person would identify you as being O.K."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Askin' your pardon, miss — they's a police station just around the corner. We'll just step over there where everything'll be safe, and I'll telephone Mr. or Mrs. Harrison."

In a police station! She swayed giddily as he slipped a hand through her arm. Casey again moved toward her; she knew what Casey was about to do. For the second time that night she believed that all was over — that she was done for — and there was nothing whatever

that she could do to save herself — nothing! She leaned weakly against the watchman.

And then for the second time that night safety came unexpectedly. A taxicab which had just turned the corner slowed down at the curb and a young man stepped out.

"Hello, there, Halpin. What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Evening, Mr. Harrison," said the watchman. "I seen this young lady going in the house —"

"And he thought I might be a thief," Jennie interrupted, with hysterical relief, "and he was going to take me to the police station —"

"Why, it's Miss Miller!" the young man exclaimed, staring his amazement.

Jennie's wits responded to the emergency. "Yes. I was restless and could n't sleep. So I took Sue's key and slipped out for a walk. I thought a walk might help me fall asleep."

"I'm sure I beg pardon, miss —" began the watchman.

"Was Halpin rough with you, Miss Miller?" young Harrison broke in sharply.

"I'm sure he did no more than what he thought was right."

"Thank you, miss. You see, Mr. Harrison —"

"Need n't explain, Halpin. Miss Miller will tell me all about it. Good-night."

Young Harrison paid off the taxi and led Jennie up the steps. Glancing back, she saw the heavy-footed Casey moving on in his manner of a mere passer-by.

When they had gained the hallway two flights up,

"Thank you ever so much — good-night," Jennie said quickly, and started for her door. But Harrison caught her by the hand.

"What's the hurry?" he asked in his pleasant voice. "Stay a minute, let's get acquainted. Besides, you know you are to tell me all about how you nearly got arrested for trying to rob us. And like a good child, take off that veil; this is n't a masked ball."

She removed the veil, also the hat, and standing directly beneath a wall light she gave him a carefully edited account of her adventure. He looked at her steadily all the while, and when she had ended he demanded in a lowered voice:

"Shall I tell you, Miss Miller, just what I think about all that?"

She gave an inward start. "What?"

"I think," he said gravely, "that you have the handsomest pair of eyes I have looked into for a year."

"Oh!"

"And I have a guess that, by the time you have decided you are a woman, you are going to be all kinds of a beauty — and that you are going to make all kinds of trouble for us poor men."

"I must be going to bed," Jennie breathed hurriedly. "Good-night."

"Wait, please" — and he caught her hand again. "Now I wonder if you really are such a quiet little mouse as you seem to the naked eye?"

"Why?"

He smiled challengingly, pleadingly. "You said something which might be construed to mean that I was a knight who had just rescued a lady in distress. Don't you think you could give the knight some reward

— one, of course, that is far beyond his poor merits — say a little kiss?”

Suddenly her awe of him fell away — but not her liking.

“I could n’t answer that,” she said eyeing him innocently, “until after I had asked permission.”

“Whose permission?”

“Gloria Raymond’s.”

“Ouch!” He winced, then flashed a smile at her. “You’re no little mouse! There’s a little devil in you — and I hope it’s a nice little devil! And what I just spoke of as a guess — you know, that later on you might make trouble for us men — that’s no guess, it’s a certainty! As for me, when you get a little older, I’m going to be very careful — very, very careful, Miss Miller.”

In mock fear, and with an amused half-serious, half-careless admiration, he bowed over the hand he still held and kissed it. “All I can ask is, don’t be too hard on me, little devil. Good-night.”

“Good-night,” she answered — and this time he let her go.

## CHAPTER XI

### JENNIE CONSIDERS A PROBLEM

TEN days later when the Easter vacation was over and the two girls were returning, Mrs. Harrison said privately to Sue: "What a simple, naïve, frank, unaffected girl your new friend is, my dear — so refreshing, so unspoiled, so unsophisticated!" And to Jennie, kissing her warmly: "I do hope you'll come home with Sue again — come soon and often!"

Jennie went back to school exulting. She was indeed succeeding — and this was only the beginning of things. That reaffirmation of purpose between herself and her father, as she thought over the scene during the days and weeks which followed, stiffened her determination to make good; and to make good by adhering to her programme of growing so imperceptibly as to cause no remark and awaken no jealousies. More clearly than before did she see that her first victory must be to win here at Braithewood.

She now settled more easily into the routine of school life, and the months, which perform such great and swift magic in a girl between sixteen and twenty, passed without notable events. All proceeded according to the careful plan Jennie had made for herself. Her summer vacations she spent, as Uncle George had suggested, in very, very select girls' camps. There were occasional visits to Sue's home over week-ends and during short vacations — though Jennie, calculating shrewdly, took pains not to go too often. During none of these visits did she again meet Kenneth. It appeared



that he was a very popular young man, with countless friends and more invitations to house-parties than he could accept even were he to do nothing else than play the constant guest; and it also appeared that this absence from business he more than compensated for by extreme concentration when he did appear at the office.

Toward the end of Jennie's second year at Braithewood, Gloria Raymond prepared for her final leave-taking. During Commencement Week, Gloria, with a superior and very mature manner which she seemed to acquire from the fact, sprung a very great surprise: she was going forth an engaged young lady — and to heighten the superiority thus given her she had her fiancé in attendance on Commencement Day. He was not Kenneth Harrison. Kenneth had been discarded for the present title-holder, who possessed a little more of those things which the social world respects than Kenneth had. But above his reputed wealth and position, and his undeniably perfect clothing, there was obviously nothing remarkable about Gloria's thoroughly paraded inamorato.

Since the distant encounter in the squash court, when the two girls had reverted to primitives, Gloria had been discreetly careful in her attitude toward Jennie. But on this her last day, her soul raised aloft by the double dignity of graduation and the presence of her fiancé, she turned to Jennie, after saying good-bye to the other girls of the group in which Jennie chanced to be.

"Well, Miller," she drawled, haughty insult behind her fine manner, "you at least I'll never see again, so I guess this is a permanent good-bye. However, I'll try to bear up."

Jennie seemed to be unconscious of the insult. "Good-bye," she said simply. "To me it will always be a source of pleasure to have known you."

The quiet of Jennie's answer was not what Gloria had expected; it threw her off her guard. "Why?" she asked.

"Because, Gloria dear," Jennie replied, "knowing you has made it possible, every morning when I wake up, to start off the day happily by just remembering how much worse everything might be if I ever had to see you again."

Gloria flamed; for an instant it looked as if these two might revert a second time. Then Gloria turned about and took the arm of her fiancé, with "Aunt is waiting for us, Leonard." And fifteen minutes later Gloria, in a car with her young man and with her aunt, a lean and tottering lady with an amazingly girlish complexion, rode forth from the grounds of Braithewood and out into the great world which was to be hers.

Little by little, very carefully, Jennie let herself out — particularly after Gloria's leaving — though she never went so far as to try to be a leader. Gloria had always assumed herself to be the first, and Gloria had been hated. Gloria could afford to be hated, for she had assured position. But Jennie needed friends; she could not afford to excite jealousy and hostility; so she tried to be no more than one of the first. And so shrewdly had she planned, so cautiously had she executed, so vigilantly had she watched for and assimilated details, that when she began her fourth year the crude girl who had entered Braithewood was hardly remembered. She was liked and admired by both the girls and the teachers. She had learned to dress correctly from the precise and unimaginative Miss Van der Brunt, and

to correctness her own taste had added originality. The singing master was enthusiastic over her voice. The little dancing master declared, in his excitable manner, that as a dancer she might become an artist if she cared to. And Miss Gresham liked to have her pour tea at her weekly teas for the girls — and more than once she said approvingly, "You did it excellently, my dear; you have good humor, you know how to make people talk, you have poise — and those are what a lady most needs."

And so, after slow years, Jennie had consummated her careful plans. She had won!

Yes, she had won. But toward the latter part of her fourth year, when she was soon to be twenty, it came upon her with growing conviction that what she had won was really only the veriest beginning — that before her was her greatest problem. In a few months her life at Braithewood would be ended. She had no home to go back to as had the other girls. No pleasant course of life was all prepared waiting for her to slip into. What was she going to do?

She saw possible answers. But this great problem so profoundly affecting her nearing future was not one she could, or had the right to, solve by herself. Others were deeply concerned — chiefly her father. She had not tried to see him again all these years; she had adhered faithfully to the promise Black Jerry had extracted from her that night when her surreptitious visit to him had so nearly ended in disaster. As for Uncle George, that worldly-wise gentleman had developed a consistent plan out of the possibility he had mentioned to Miss Gresham the evening he had brought Jennie to Braithewood — that the necessity of travel-

ing imposed upon him by his affairs might prevent him from coming frequently to visit his ward. He had never come a second time; it seemed safer so; hardly any one had seen him on his first visit except a maid or two and Miss Gresham — and he thought it wiser for his personality to be no more than a dim and fading memory. He had written Miss Gresham occasionally, but all financial and business affairs had been transacted through the firm of reputable attorneys.

But Jennie had his address, and she now wrote him an unsigned letter which she did not trust to the open letter-basket of the school. She stole into the village and slipped the letter into the safety of the drop of the post-office. Two days later Miss Gresham sent for her.

"Jennie, I have just had word from your guardian. He is in New York for only half a day. He is going to motor out to see you. He wishes to take you out with him for a little ride, and since his time is so extremely limited he asks that you be ready to join him in the car the moment he drives up. He expects to arrive at about four."

"Very well, Miss Gresham," Jennie replied.

At ten minutes to four, warmly dressed against the shrewd April wind, Jennie was waiting on the piazza. At exactly four a large car swung into the drive and slowed down at the steps, in the tonneau a single figure, goggled and face muffled in upturned collar. Jennie sprang in and the car moved away.

"How are we going to meet dad, Uncle George?" she whispered to the figure beside her.

"There he is," Uncle George whispered back, and nodded at the goggled and deeply-collared man at the wheel. "But we'll not talk about things just yet."

Uncle George had evidently planned all details in advance, for twenty minutes later on an obscure side road, Black Jerry let down the bars opening into a wooded plot, then drove along a rutty road down into a rough hollow screened on its rim by a thicket of leafless hazel and bramble. But even in this seemingly safe isolation the two men did not venture upon a too open familiarity. They pushed their goggles up on their foreheads and Jerry clambered into the tonneau where he sat on one of the little folding seats, hunger and admiration and awe in his dark, grim face, but he did not offer a single caress to this far-removed young lady who was his child. And now for the second time Jennie sat in consultation with the two men who had tried to shape her life according to their ideas of giving her as good a chance as any other man's child.

"Well, now, Jennie, what's the trouble?" began Uncle George.

She told them, ending with: "You see, when this school year is over, I'm at the end of things. Other girls have homes and families to go back to. There's no home for me to go to, unless it is back to the Pekin."

"I see," said Uncle George. "It sure does look, Jerry, as though the first part of our plan for Jennie was just about played through to its finish."

Black Jerry nodded.

"I've thought of a lot of things," Jennie went on. "But you, dad, you've already spent so much money on me — and putting me at Braithewood was all your plan and Uncle George's — and I know it's all meant so much to you — so I felt you both had a right to help decide what I ought to do next."



"Sure, Jennie. For example, what had you thought of?" queried the old man.

"I might take a post-graduate course at Braithewood. That would settle the problem of my having some place to go."

"But we'd probably have to face exactly the same problem in a year or two years," commented Uncle George. "And in the meantime perhaps most of your best friends would have faded from the picture. How about it, Jerry?"

"Let's settle it now," replied Black Jerry.

"Well," continued Jennie, "another idea was that I might stay on for another year and take the business course, and then earn my living."

"I know what your business course is like — I've seen your catalogue," spoke up Uncle George. "They teach a young lady how to fill out a check and how to cut the coupons on the bonds her old man's given her for a Christmas present. That's the size of it — except that in a footnote they do offer a course in stenography and typewriting. That's the only thing in all their business bunk that'll really bring in money — and I say, Jerry, after keeping Jennie here all this time, do you want her to start in in an office pulling down eight dollars a week? — which'll be all she'll be worth."

"Nothing doing," Jerry replied briefly. "It'll be a bum return on what I've spent, and Jennie'll lose all she's gained. What's next?"

"Well, my singing teacher thinks a lot of my voice. I've thought I might go on the stage — in some kind of a musical play, I mean."

"I'll answer that," Uncle George spoke up promptly and emphatically. "That's the bummiest idea yet! Un-

less you're a whale of a musical star — you may be good, Jennie, but I don't think you'll ever be that — the Broadway musical life is the rottenest life ever invented. Especially for a woman. There's no music in it and there's no life in it! You've got to be ready to play any kind of a game to get the good jobs — anyhow, most of the women do — and you're lucky if you've got a job half the time. And about the time you begin to think you're getting good, you're really all through and nobody wants you. And before that time you've probably married some musical comedy actor — oh, but the men there are a bum bunch! — who's signed a life contract to appear exclusively in high-ball attractions, and who ain't missing a performance. And there you are! I'm not even going to pass this on to Jerry; I'm going to settle it myself. That idea is canned! Now, what else have you thought of?"

"Nothing else. Nothing, that is, that would earn my living."

"Who said anything about your earning your living!" It was Jerry's gruff voice that spoke. "I ain't worrying about that — anyhow, not now. What else could you do that would keep you up where you are?"

"Well, my room-mate's mother, Mrs. Harrison, has asked me to spend the summer with them."

"That begins to listen like something, Jerry," commented Uncle George. "Where is their place, Jennie?"

"Somewhere out on Long Island."

"That looks like a good lead to me, Jerry. What do you say?"

"It'll keep her up at the top," agreed Jerry. "And if by the end of the summer nothing has turned up, we can

then talk about her going back to school or doing something else. I say it's O.K."

And thus, out there in that bleak solitude, the farther stage of what was to be Jennie's chance, was decided on. But before Black Jerry resumed his goggles and his rôle of chauffeur, he gripped Jennie's hand.

"You're somebody now" — his eyes glittered with pride — "and, whatever happens, you're going to stay somebody! Remember, I don't want you to run no risks, nor do a thing, that may spoil your big chance. I want you to promise me, Jennie!"

All he said fitted in with Jennie's own soaring dreams; but she felt just a bit frightened as she gazed into the tremendous earnestness, the fierce gloating, of Black Jerry's face.

"I promise, dad!"

Half an hour later Jennie stepped down in front of Braithewood Hall, and the big car, with its muffled and goggled figure in the tonneau and its big chauffeur muffled and goggled, rolled away around the perfect curve of the drive.

At last Jennie's four years at Braithewood reached their end and climax: Commencement Day arrived, and Jennie was to deliver the valedictory for her class. The exercises were held in the Braithewood open-air theater, with the cars of parents and guests parked on the lawn about it. Miss Gresham told Jennie that her guardian had telephoned that he would come out by train and go back in his motor which would meet him at the school. Uncle George did not arrive, but his motor did. There was excitement enough for Jennie in the kindly attentions of Mrs. Harrison, who was going to take the two girls

back with her; and in the attentions of the great man who was to deliver the formal address; and in the thought of having to speak before all these visitors: but when at length her time came, and she stood alone on the little stage, straight and slender in her white, speaking her few words, all she then could see or think of was the chauffeur in Uncle George's otherwise empty car — a barrel-chested man, slipped low down behind his wheel, his goggled eyes never once shifting from her.

## CHAPTER XII

### REËNTER AN OLD FRIEND

**T**HOUGH the Harrisons' country place on the north shore of Long Island had been opened, and the family was supposed to be settled there for the summer, it was to the town house that Mrs. Harrison bore Sue and Jennie. This also was open, with half a corps of servants, for the business convenience of Mr. Harrison and Kenneth. Not until warmer days would the two men begin their summer schedule of daily voyaging to and fro in the Harrison motor yacht, the *Myra*, which could split the waters of the Sound at thirty-five miles an hour or better.

Following Jennie's very short valedictory there came the real Commencement address, which was delivered by a Justice of the Supreme Court, who, as a speaker, could out-wind any man in public life — and after that there was Miss Gresham's farewell tea to the graduates — so that it was half-past six when the Harrison car reached the house in the East Seventies. Jennie had just begun to settle herself in the room which she had occupied on her first visit to the Harrisons, when Sue burst in upon her rather breathlessly.

"Jennie — what do you think! Father has a bad headache, nothing serious, and mother wants to stay home with him. There was a note for me from Kenneth; he invites us out to dinner — then to the theater — then to supper. And mother says we may go. Would you like to?"

"Of course," said Jennie.



"And there's to be some one else — Billy Grayson."

"Billy Grayson?" Jennie pretended to be struggling with a baffled memory. "Billy Grayson? Sue — where have I heard that name before?"

"Don't waste time trying to tease me," Sue replied, flushing. "Hurry up, dear. We're to be ready at seven."

Jennie set about dressing with not a little excitement; thinking of Sue's handsome brother, with his amused smile, whom she had hardly seen since that Easter visit of years ago when he had rescued her from the night watchman and the impending Casey, and when he had tried, not very impetuously, to collect tribute in the coinage of a kiss. She dressed with care, and she now had the things to dress with: a girlish evening gown of pea-green charmeuse touched with silver — bought at Madame *Hélène's* with the hesitating approval of Miss Van der Brunt; and there were green stockings to match and silver slippers, and a richly brodered mandarin coat of blue and green and silver with old-rose lining. Finished, the coat flaring open, she stood gazing for a minute or more into the long mirror — at her dark eyes, her thick, night-colored hair filleted with a silver band, her dark cheeks with the faint rose of excitement in them. She liked what she saw; she liked it very much indeed.

Her clock showed ten minutes past seven; she had not yet acquired woman's prerogative of being equably late, so in a bit of a flutter she hurried out. As she slipped down the stairway she heard voices in the drawing-room — Sue's and another's, and the teasing voice of Sue's brother. They were speaking of her, and instinctively she paused near the foot of the stairway.

"Is n't that partner of yours ever going to show up?"

— or did n't you tell her I'd humbly asked her to honor us?" It was the voice of Kenneth that she heard.

"Don't worry — she'll be right down, Kenneth," said Sue.

"I hope so," the half-grumbling, half-humorous, and wholly pleasant voice went on. "I want to see what she's grown up to be. She was a funny little fellow when I saw her before — shy, owning about a half-dozen words, with eyes that saw everything, never certain just what to do with herself. Does she still wear a gun on each hip, Sue?"

"Wait till she comes down and see for yourself."

"I can't wait — I'm going to reconnoiter."

Before Jennie could move he had stepped out into the hall — an even more handsome figure than he had seemed to the eyes of sixteen. He halted, and looked straight up into her eyes, and she looked straight down into his.

"Hello, and who might you be?" he demanded, surprise in his gaze, yet at his ease.

"I was just going to ask that question of you."

"I? Oh, I'm just one of the boarders Mrs. Harrison keeps. Now, you — perhaps you're the person they call Jennie Miller?"

"Perhaps."

"And perhaps you heard everything I was just saying about you — or her?"

"Perhaps — just possibly." She felt excitement, but no embarrassment. Nothing else so definitely marked what time and change had done: at sixteen she had first stood in Kenneth Harrison's presence awkward and abashed, and feeling that he was of an older generation;

at twenty she felt herself of his own age, and was able to exchange banter with him on even terms. "But if I did overhear, it's not wholly my fault that sound travels and I have ears."

Suddenly he smiled engagingly and held out his hand. "I'm glad to see you again, Miss Miller!"

She came down the three steps and took his hand. "Thank you."

"May I tell you something?" he asked.

"Please do."

His smile became very direct and personal, but its apparent frankness negated any offense that might otherwise have been in it. "You may not carry guns, Miss Miller — but you are a very unsafe young woman to be allowed abroad."

"Why?"

"You remember what I said years ago — after midnight, in the hallway above: that you might grow up to be a very dangerous person to my poor sex?"

"I don't seem to remember a thing about it."

"Well, you've done it! Perhaps not intentionally or maliciously — but you certainly have done it!"

There was real admiration in voice and eye. Jennie thrilled with pleasure, but before she could reply Sue came out of the drawing-room, and Jennie found herself taking the hand of a nice-looking, blue-eyed young man and saying, "I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Grayson."

Twenty minutes later the four of them were sitting down to dinner in Delmonico's. It soon became essentially, not a party of four, but a party of two twos. Sue had mentioned Billy Grayson to her now and then, in an attempted offhand manner, but if Jennie had not

before suspected what young Grayson meant in Sue's life, she learned it well enough now from the shy but obvious way in which the interest of each was centered in the other. Kenneth, even had he wished to do otherwise, could hardly have done else than give his attention chiefly to Jennie — and Jennie sensed that he did not wish otherwise; she sensed that the admiration which had come into his eyes the moment he had stepped out and seen her on the stairway, was increasing with every minute.

Jennie had no consciousness of caring particularly for Kenneth — he was for her, at that hour, just a handsome, fascinating young man. But his admiration was more exhilarating than the champagne; it gave her strength, it lifted her. And she looked better than before, and spoke better, and gave a freer play to all her faculties — and his open admiration kept on growing as she unfolded.

During the dinner she dimly remembered something Sue had told her about Gloria Raymond: how Gloria, once half-engaged to her brother, and actually engaged to another young man when she had graduated, had broken the real engagement after the cards were out, and was once more in the midst of an active and determined affair with Kenneth. But what might be between Kenneth Harrison and Gloria Raymond at this moment concerned Jennie in no slightest degree; the present was sufficient unto itself.

It was a wonderful dinner — a thrilling dinner. But at length it was over, and just as the curtain rose on the second act they took their seats in a theater. The setting of the act was a ballroom in some millionaire's house. There was not much of a story, but there were

lots of girls — “With Lots of Girls,” that phrase was run beneath the play’s title on the posters — in very large hats and in dresses which certainly had never been selected by Miss Van der Brunt. And after the girls had sung something with an ogling air of naughty innocence, and had danced and maneuvered, they marched off as a tramp comedian came on with his trick dog; and after the tramp comedian had finished the stunts which he had been repeating without variation for five years in vaudeville houses, a young woman entered in an evening gown of a cut which knew no fear (exit tramp and dog) followed by the previous young women now gowned as guests at the ball, and followed also by chorus men also in supposititious fashionable evening wear. The young woman, evidently the hostess of the stage party, advanced to the footlights, conscious of her every charm, with the air of being a personage that every one knew and wished to see, and sang a supposedly humorous topical ditty, dealing with the varieties of stumbling men a woman has to dance with, each verse mournfully ending with “And that’s the sort of partner a hostess always gets.” After she had responded to her last encore, there was dancing of the ballroom type by the guests — then there was an instant’s pause in the action of the play while the guests retired up-stage — then through a gilded doorway sauntered a slender young man.

Instantly the whole theater was applauding. The young man had to bow his appreciation, which he did with extraordinary grace, holding his silk hat with none of the half-afraidness with which men in real life manage that insignia of formality. He had to bow again — and now something distantly familiar about him drifted



into Jennie's mind. She tried to place him — she could not — but the sense of familiarity persisted. He had a few words of comedy dialogue with the hostess, then laying his hat on a chair, he slipped an arm about the lady and the two went circling around in a ballroom dance.

And then, suddenly, Jennie knew him. It all came upon her with a rush — those long-gone years — the Pekin — their petty rogueries. She almost gasped aloud.

"Who — who is he?" she at length asked Kenneth.

"What — you don't know who he is!" Kenneth exclaimed.

"Miss Gresham did n't let us come in to see plays very often," she explained, "and I've read almost nothing about the theater the last four years."

"That," said Kenneth with emphasis, "is Jackson Holt."

"Is he — is he very good?"

"Good? He's the best there is in his line. He's a marvel! He's the real star of this show!" And then Kenneth added: "He's not only good on the stage, he's a gentleman off of it — I happen to know him a little. And the women who like to dance are crazy about him; he goes just about where he likes in society."

Jennie drew a slow, deep breath. So that was Slim Jackson! And so Slim had made good his boast about getting to the top! She watched him closely. There was nothing vulgar or suggestive or exaggerated in his work; it was graceful, finished, refined; it was ballroom dancing at its truly highest. His partner was good — but he belonged to a different order of dancers. The gods had put gifts in his feet. Indeed he was a marvel!

But how had he done it all? How had he got up here? Jennie sat wondering through the succeeding scenes of the play. . . . Once she had a start of a different sort. Glancing back, she saw a man leaning against the orchestra rail who seemed to be staring fixedly at her. She thought it was Harry Edwards, and she turned quickly again to the stage. But a few minutes later curiosity impelled her to look backwards; a more composed glance showed her that the man standing where she thought Harry stood was not Harry Edwards. She had been deceived by a mere fancied resemblance, had been played upon by this resurgence of old memories. . . . For the rest of the performance she continued to wonder about the rise of Slim Jackson.

She was relieved to get away from the theater. With Slim out of her sight, and in the company of the little party which was now in gay mood, she tried to throw off the disturbing memories, the sense of nearness to her old life. By the time they were all in Kenneth's car, the feeling of security, of confidence, which she had slowly won during the past four years had returned; it reassured her, convincingly, that time had wiped out all remembrance of her, that she had gone too far, had risen too high, ever to be connected with the Jennie Malone who once had been.

Spring had ended with summer-like days that year, and the roof-gardens were already open. Ten minutes after they had left the theater the four stepped out upon the Astor roof. A captain instantly sighted Kenneth and was beside them. "Your table is this way, please, Mr. Harrison," he said, and led them across the roof to a table beneath an arbor of vari-colored lights. The quickness with which her escort was recognized, the

deference paid him, elated Jennie; and she was further gratified when she saw that the table was already set, and when waiters began immediately to serve. She knew then that the table had been reserved and the supper ordered in advance. This, indeed, was attention!

Then she noticed something else which in the first excitement of this new experience she had overlooked. "Why, there are five covers!" she exclaimed. "There are only four of us — who's the fifth place for?"

"A friend of mine promised to drop around if he could — none of you know him," Kenneth answered.

He spoke casually. It was an element of his character, which Jennie was yet to discover, that he liked to do carefully planned and perhaps even big things, in an offhand manner — as though they were commonplaces to him. Perhaps he so acted because it was a subtle way of increasing his own importance — because it fed his egotism, which his sister had declaimed against, but of which Jennie had seen no trace. Perhaps it was merely because of his quizzical bent; perhaps merely because he had a penchant for little surprises.

Jennie had danced one number with Kenneth, dancing it very formally, and was seated again at the table with Sue and young Grayson, when coming out upon the roof she saw that which caused her whole being to go suddenly still. It was Slim Jackson. Captains and head waiters hurried toward this great celebrity of their world, eagerly, obsequiously; but before they reached him his scanning eyes had caught sight of Kenneth, on his feet with a signaling hand, and he was crossing toward the table.

It went through Jennie like a shot: so — that fifth cover was for Slim Jackson!

Frantic, yet controlling herself, she turned her back as if to pluck a sprig from a tubbed privet-tree; but all the while her sidewise glance was watching Slim draw nearer. "Sorry, if I'm late, Kenneth," she heard him say — "but you know you can't just wish your make-up off." And then she watched his introduction to the others. What would he do when he saw her? her frenzy kept asking. He would start with amazement at this unexpected meeting with her, and his involuntary start would lead to her certain exposure —

"Miss Miller," called Kenneth.

It was inevitable. Jennie summoned her strength, and turned, holding the sprig of privet she had plucked.

"Miss Miller," said Kenneth, "I want you to meet Mr. Jackson Holt whom you saw to-night."

Her face was pale; the gaze she raised to him was strained in its fixity. But he did not start, as she had thought he would. The look he gave her was conventionally pleasant; it was the look he might have given any woman he was meeting for the first time.

"I am, indeed, pleased to meet you, Miss Miller," he acknowledged in an even voice, bowing with his extraordinary grace.

Jennie came as near to fainting as she had ever done. He did not know her! Her courage, her self-confidence, flowed back. Well, was there really anything so strange in that, after all? Four years had passed — she was in company in which he would never dream to find her. Certainly there had been change enough since the night of that far-away last meeting — the time she had danced with him at the Pekin. . . . Well, she was going

to play it through just as though they had never met before.

After a few bites, Slim asked Sue to dance, and Jennie danced with young Grayson. And then, after a few more fragments of the supper, Slim invited her to take the floor with him. She dared not refuse; she had said that her part had to be to act just as though Slim were any other friend of Kenneth's; so she arose and gave herself into his arms. She danced the steps correctly, but formally, just as she had done with Kenneth; she was on her guard not to betray any trace of her old self. She believed she was acting the stranger well. And as for Slim, he *was* the stranger; he could not have been so formal, and yet so gracefully at ease in his formality, had he been other. She was getting on well — very well, indeed!

They had circled the roof once and were a second time at a point farthest from their table, when he stopped. "Miss Miller, you must let me show you the lights of New York from this roof," he said; and her hand through his arm he led her from among the dancers to a quiet place against the parapet.

"Some people tell us all the scenery is in Europe or out West," he said, — "but New York, at night, is n't it worth looking at?"

"Yes — it is wonderful."

They stood silent a moment gazing over the stone coping of the wall at the white day that streamed up from the deep streets. Then, suddenly, Jennie felt a hand laid upon her hand within his arm, and felt his breath close against her cheek.

"You're doing it great, Jennie!" he whispered. "But in the name of God, how have you done it?"



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PAST REACHES FORWARD

JENNIE caught the coping with her free hand; that alone saved her from falling. For a moment she hung on dazed, unable to speak. Then she tried to answer calmly, but even to her own ears her voice sounded husky and tremulous.

"I fear you are mistaken, Mr. Holt."

"Ah, Jennie, cut out the kidding," Slim said good-naturedly. He had lapsed from the very proper and cultivated speech, which she had remarked at the table, into the easy method of talk which she knew of old. "Don't try to fool your old side-kick, Jennie. You can't — any more than you could fool Black Jerry."

She slowly looked about at him. In his face was undeniable recognition. There was no use trying to pretend longer.

"But if you know me now, Slim," she said, "then why were n't you surprised when you first came to our table?"

"That puzzles you? Well, that's easy," he laughed softly. "Kenneth Harrison told me this afternoon he was coming to the show — and asked me to join his little party to-night. So between the second and the third acts I was at the peep-hole in the curtain sizing up the bunch I had signed up to meet. My eyes stuck to you — you looked like somebody I ought to know — and then I placed you. That's when I got my real jolt — when I stood there alone at the peep-hole. I sized up this much, that the Harrisons did n't know

who you really were. So when I came here to-night I was all readied up to play the stranger. Easy enough, was n't it?"

"Yes," she said.

"But you, Jennie!" he exclaimed. "You sure look a winner! — and you're right in with this classy bunch as though you were born there! The last I heard of you you had jumped your bail and had run away, and no one knew where you were, and no one had ever heard from you. And now here you are! In the name of God, Jennie, how did you turn the trick?"

Briefly she outlined the past four years.

"But it must have taken dough, real dough, to have put that across," he said. "Who put up the dough?"

"Dad."

"Black Jerry! All of it?"

"Yes."

"And who's backing you now?"

"Dad."

"You mean to say you're playing this game on what Black Jerry shoves you? — playing a big game like this on a shoestring like that!"

"Yes."

He whistled softly. "Well, you or Black Jerry may be short on chips, but you're long on nerve! Here's hoping you win out!"

"I can't — unless you promise not to tell on me."

"Oh, I'll never tell," he assured her.

"Thanks, Slim."

"Why should I tell?" he went on, smiling frankly. "Even if I wanted to be a crook, what'd there be in it for me? You're going up — I can see that. I'd rather have a friend at the top than a friend at the bottom —

where you'd be if my tongue got to running too free and easy. Sure, there'll never be a whisper or a sign from me, Jennie."

She thanked him again; and then she asked how he had come so far in four years. He lifted his shoulders and smiled at her with cynical frankness.

"You know I never did hate myself, Jennie. I got up here because I'm a clever guy. And also because I've worked like hell — yes, don't you forget it, I've worked like hell! But I've done it chiefly because I own a bean. I danced six months in vaudeville; at first I thought it was great. Then I saw I would get nowhere unless I developed an individual act — something that was different. That was when I put the bean to work. I saw that the stage was all cluttered up with teams doing eccentric or comedy dances, or dancing stunts — pretty bum, most of them. I decided that the freshest line for me was to try to become the best straight dancer in America: you know, the social and ballroom stuff, done better than anybody else ever dreamed of doing it — more finish to it, more refinement. I started out on that line — and believe me, Jennie, I sure worked. I took lessons as long as anybody could teach me anything; I practiced by myself; I worked out new ideas and new combinations; I got new partners for my act, and let 'em out as fast as I got too good for them — and so I kept on, getting better and better as a dancer. Am I knocking myself too hard, Jennie?"

"Please go on."

"And all the time," he continued, "I was looking out for other things. I made it my business to learn to dress like a gentleman and act like a gentleman. There are a lot of dames in this burg, swell dames all right, who will

privately take you on and teach you society manners and society conversation and everything there is to know about how to behave with the ladies — and, Jennie, you would n't believe how much coin I paid out to one of those dames — but I made her earn it, you bet, and what I got was worth a hundred times what I paid. And as the result of it all," he ended, "here I am, the delightful and popular gentleman you see."

"You're the one who has done wonders, Slim!" she exclaimed.

"Thanks for the flowers, Jennie. But honest," he grinned, "it does seem a queer situation when I think it all over. I've never advertised where I came from; but I've never tried to hide it — the most I've done has been to twist my name a bit to get something that sounds better for the stage. And here I am, Slim Jackson, formerly of the Pekin — now making more dough than any other man in this line in the country and welcome any place I go! And some of the swell ladies, real and would-be, trying to slip me money on the quiet to dance with 'em! Funny, ain't it? But I'm not kidding myself in any way. I'm good, but this game's not going to last forever, so yours very truly is cleaning up while the suckers are falling for my graft."

"Slim," she exclaimed with a sudden thought, "you and Kenneth Harrison seem to be friends. You're not trying to put anything across on him — anything crooked, I mean?"

"On my partner — of course not."

"Your partner?"

"He owns a piece of the show I'm in, and so do I — he plays with the show business on the side quite a lot. Also we're in two or three other deals together. I'll nat-

urally be running into you now and then, Jennie; but don't worry — you'll always be Miss Miller whom I met for the first time in my life to-night."

After a moment they turned away from the wall and swung again into the dance. "Come on, Jennie — give her a little gas!" Slim whispered. Jennie felt such relief that she required no urging; her spirit free, she danced as she had danced in the old Pekin days, plus all that little M. Dubois had taught her. And marvel though Slim was to look at while dancing, he was an even greater marvel as a partner: — no wonder women of smart society were said to exchange, with decent indirectness, large sums for a dance or so with him. Jennie forgot herself: dancing with Slim was like being a strain of exquisite music, like being a spring wind.

He swung her back to the wall they had just left, and faced her, his eyes eager. "Jennie, you're the real goods!" he said excitedly. "You're my next partner — professional partner, I mean."

"But, Slim —" she began, amazed.

"Oh, I don't want to spring you all at once. You're not ripe. But after some private work with me, you'll be great!"

"But, Slim — your present partner —"

"Doris Dorraine!" he sniffed. "Doris does n't have the real class! You saw that yourself to-night. And then Doris may drop out of the game any time and leave me flat. There are too many men in her young life. . . . But you, Jennie, you've got everything! You may name your own terms — only you've got to come in! We'll show this old town something it's never seen before!"

As she listened to his excited speech and gazed into his eager face, a sense of there being something familiar



about this scene came upon her. And then she remembered. On the night she had last seen Slim he had made her this same proposal.

And her answer was in substance now the same. "It's a wonderful chance you're offering me, Slim — but there's something else I want to do."

He nodded over at their table. "You mean you're going up with that bunch?"

"I don't know, Slim — I don't know yet. But it's something else I want to do. I'm quite definite that it's to be something else."

The excitement faded from his face. He gazed at her thoughtfully, keenly; then he smiled.

"I'm not giving the idea up, Jennie. But it might somehow work out as a better business proposition after you had solidly landed high up. More publicity. I'm not going to bother you about it any more — but just you remember, I'm not giving the idea up." And then he added swiftly, daringly: "Nor of marrying you, either!" — and then before she could speak, "Come on, we'd better get back to the others."

But even as he started to lead her away, he checked her. "Hello, there's another of your old friends!" he exclaimed. "No — two more!"

"Who?" she breathed sharply.

"Harry Edwards — remember him? — and with him Uncle George. At a table in the far corner, just behind you."

She cautiously glanced around. First she saw Uncle George, arrayed as never were the lilies of the field, for Uncle George, in this uptown country that he called home, believed in tailors and jewelers and haberdashers and all their tribe. And then she saw Harry; he also was

in evening dress, though his garments were of a lesser glory. There was a disorder in his appearance which suggested a disorder in his mind. That disorder might have been augmented by a glass which stood beside his elbow — by that glass, its predecessors and its kin.

So much of detail her quick eyes noted, even though the chief, almost the only, thing she saw were Harry's eyes staring straight at her. They seemed wild eyes to her.

"Come on, Slim — let's get back," she breathed quickly. She went into his arms, they swung through the crowd, and a few moments later they were again at their table.

"I say, Miss Miller," cried Kenneth enthusiastically, "you know you really are a wonder! I had no idea you were such a dancer! Jackson himself has n't much on you. And the next dance is mine — and remember, you're not to be any little Quakeress such as you were when you danced with me the first time."

And when he stood up, she could but accede, though a quick glance showed Harry Edwards's gaze still fixed upon her: a glower it now was. She tried to dance as spontaneously as she had with Slim, and she drew from Kenneth unstinted praise; but though she was smiling into his face she hardly heard his words — she was always conscious of the eyes of Harry Edwards.

When she once more seated herself at their table, Slim handed her a folded paper, remarking, "A waiter left that for you, Miss Miller." She opened it; it was a sheet torn from a wine-list; and across it was penciled:

I want to see you. Come to see me — or I'll come to see you.

It was unsigned, but there was no need for signature;

she knew the writing. She sensed danger — great danger — though she did not foresee its shape. She thought rapidly, then leaned toward Slim.

"Please ask me for the dance after this," she whispered.

He did so. "Dance over toward Harry Edwards," she said when they were on the floor, "appear to recognize him and Uncle George as old friends, stop to speak to them and then pretend to introduce me."

"What's all that bunk for? Who's to be fooled?"

"The people we've just left. I've got to speak to Harry."

Slim guided her to where the two men sat — seemed to see them for the first time — went through the show of introducing Jennie. Uncle George instantly caught his cue, and bowed gravely and with very fine dignity over her hand. But beneath his breath he said:

"Jennie, you've got 'em all out-looking by a thousand miles! You're going great, Jennie! You're going great — and you're only half-started!"

But Harry Edwards paid no heed to cues. His inflamed eyes blazed wildly at Jennie.

"What's all this fool acting for?" he demanded.

"Now — now, better come on home, Harry," urged Uncle George.

"I'll not go home!"

"Harry — Harry," expostulated the old man in a low voice, "don't make a young fool of yourself!"

"You leave me alone, Uncle George — this is my business!" Fortunately no one was within a dozen feet of them and the dance music swallowed their voices. "Jennie," he cried thickly, "I'm not going to stand all this any longer!"

"Harry, you've been drinking," she accused.

"Well, what if I have!"

"And you've been following me to-night!"

"Well, what if I have!" he cried. "Yes," he added, "I have been following you. I overheard Harrison at the office to-day arrange for this party, and I knew where you were going to be. I've seen you and Kenneth Harrison together all night — and I'm not going to stand for it! Yes, I've followed you! Now, what are you going to do about it?"

She perceived that drink had inflamed his jealousy to the point of recklessness. She tried to speak soothingly, and at the same time to seek the purpose in his mad brain.

"The question is, Harry, what are you going to do?"

"What am I going to do? Here's what I'm going to do!" he cried savagely in his muddled mixture of fury and love, looming menacingly above her. "I've been waiting four years for you — hoping! — but now I see I've got no chance so long as you can stick it out among those swells. If you were who you really are, on your own level, then I might have some chance with you. I'm going to have that chance — you understand! I'm going to tell those people, everybody, just who you are!"

There was insane determination in his deep-breathing figure, in his flushed, tense face; she saw that arguing with him would avail her nothing. And she saw how logical and simple and effective his announced purpose seemed to his frenzied brain: if she were torn down, then she would have him. And just as she realized the magnitude of the danger he represented — she did that the instant his last word passed his lips — she glimpsed Kenneth Harrison making a determined way toward

them. Again there rushed upon her the dizzy feeling that all was over.

"For God's sake, Harry, get out of this!" urged Uncle George.

"I stick right here!" returned Harry.

Uncle George stepped quickly forward to intercept the approaching Kenneth Harrison. He held out his hand, smiling.

"Hello, Kenneth. Nice of you to come over to visit an old tramp." He took Kenneth's arm. "Listen — there's something I been wanting to tell you. Just step over here for a minute."

But Uncle George's attempted intervention met with instant failure. "Not now, Uncle George" — here in his own world every one knew Uncle George, and knew him by no other name. Kenneth freed himself and turned quickly upon Harry.

"What's this mean, Edwards?" he said sharply.

"What's this mean?" Harry repeated, glaring belligerently. There was a moment's pause, with the two men facing each other. Then Harry exploded. "It means that —"

But even while Jennie seemed reeling to instant destruction, her wits were at work. They spoke up swiftly of their own accord, interrupting Harry — and her body moved swiftly between the two men.

"Mr. Holt had just introduced me to his friends," she explained, "and Mr. Edwards had just asked me to dance with him and I had just promised. Shall we try it, Mr. Edwards?"

As she finished, she slipped her right hand into Harry's left, laid her own left upon his shoulder, fell instantly into step with the music and started away. Automati-



cally his right hand went to her waist and they were dancing.

They had made the round of the roof once, both silent, before she began even partially to recover herself. She then ventured to look at Harry. The tensivity of his face had relaxed ever so little. They danced on, she now and then speaking an easy, inconsequential word — always watching his face. After that dance and during the encore number, it seemed to her that the crazed, determined look was gone — or almost gone.

"Harry," she said quietly, gently, almost as if explaining things to herself, "I don't think you've been quite yourself to-night. And I think it's been chiefly because you've been drinking. You never did drink much or often, so it's affected you all the more. I think that was what was the matter with you, Harry."

"That's only part of it, Jennie!" he burst out, with a groan — and she then knew that the fierce tensivity in him was broken. "I've been waiting four years for you, loving you all the time. And when I saw you with Kenneth Harrison — with him when I did n't dare be with you — and when I saw the way he looked at you in the theater and the way he looked at you up here — I — I — oh, it was just jealousy, Jennie!"

"But, Harry, Kenneth Harrison —"

"Perhaps I would n't have minded it so much," he rushed on, "if I did n't feel that Kenneth Harrison, for all his nice ways, was n't — well, exactly all he should be. He's not good enough for you, Jennie! He's — no, I should n't be saying anything against him; I know nothing of my own knowledge. Yes, I think I would have minded it just the same whoever the other man was!"

"But, Harry," she said in her quiet voice, "I hardly know Kenneth Harrison. It's his sister that I know — that's my friend. I don't care anything about him; and he's hardly seen me more than twice — so how can he care about me? It's just something you're dreaming, Harry."

"I'm not so sure of that," he returned. The orchestra had just stopped, leaving them near the entrance to the roof. There was dumb misery and longing in his eyes. "I really lost myself awhile ago, Jennie," he said humbly; "I had just one desire, to pull you down. I want you, Jennie — I shall always want you — and I'm going to try to get you — but I shall never again try to get you that way. You have nothing to fear from me, Jennie — nothing at all. And now, I'm not going to take you back to your friends. I — I can't. Good-night."

He turned quickly and was gone. For a moment she stood there alone, a pang in her own heart, seeing that misery and longing in his frank, boyish eyes; he still seemed just a boy to her — perhaps always would — though he was now twenty-six, and past.

Before she had recovered herself sufficiently to start away, Kenneth Harrison was beside her. "He acted mighty queer — Edwards," Kenneth said, with a curiosity in which there was a bit of anger. "What was the matter with him?"

"Mr. Edwards did act queer," she agreed. "It must have been because he had been drinking. I thought it better to dance with him than to have a scene."

"Of course." Her watchful eyes saw that her explanation was ample — that he had no suspicions. "If he had been impertinent, I'd have had him fired out of the

firm — even though he does have the backing of a strong interest, and even though he is getting to be a valuable man.”

Jennie did not reply. A little later, homeward-bound in Kenneth's motor, beneath the surface chatter she thought dazedly about that evening. She was on the upgrade, yes: but the strange part was how her old life seemed to be coming forward and merging itself with her new — how two of the persons, both lovers in a way, she had thought she had left behind in the past, had that night strangely reëntered her life. And she foresaw that both Harry and Slim Jackson would in some way touch her future. As to that future, she felt quite secure: both had promised to keep her secret.

And then, suddenly — it seemed to spring from nowhere, but perhaps it was the working of subconscious logic — her mind had only one thought, her father. Would he, too, emerge from the past and become an active presence in her life? That could hardly be any more unexpected than what had happened that night. If he did, when might it come, and how?

## CHAPTER XIV

### JENNIE FEELS HER WAY

THE car had just turned through the creeper-skirted stone wall that shut "Silver Bluffs" off from the highway, and had just drawn up at the broad entrance of the house.

"Here we are, my dear," Mrs. Harrison said to Jennie. "And I hope you are going to like it, and be free in it, just as though it were your own home."

"I'm sure I shall, Mrs. Harrison," Jennie replied with that pleasant shyness which had become almost a natural part of her adopted character.

"Sue will show you to the room that is to be yours, and Maggie" — a maid, who with two menservants had come out to the car — "will help you in any way you want. Remember, you are to look upon this as home."

"Thank you," said Jennie.

Two minutes later Sue left her in her room, saying she would return as soon as she had cleaned up a bit and got into fresh clothes. Jennie refused the offered ministrations of Maggie and dismissed her; and without pausing even to examine her room, other than to note that it was very large — quite as large as the entire home of her childhood — she slipped out and made her way down the broad stairway and through the sea-facing front door. She did n't want to be in her room when Sue came back; she did n't want to see Sue — not just then.

She had hardly had an hour to herself since before

graduation. Following the night at Slim Jackson's play and on the Astor roof, there had been two days of shopping — busy, eager days, each brought to an exhilarating close by theater- and supper-parties given by the always-ready Kenneth. There had been too much excitement, too many events, to permit a cool and careful study of her new circumstances. She felt the pressing need of such study, the need to be alone.

She walked rapidly down a brick-paved path and found herself upon the edge of a bluff thrust far out into the Sound, below her the water beating gently upon a mica-glittering beach. She looked back. Jennie had hitherto visited the Harrisons only at their town house; and though she had seen in the illustrated supplements of the Sunday papers the pictures of the so-called "cottages" of the rich, and had passed many in motoring about the country, she was rather awed as she now made her first real observation of Silver Bluffs. The low-lying brick house seemed to her to contain far-flung dozens of great comfortable rooms — there were sun parlors and great piazzas; there were green-houses and splendid gardens; and sloping down from the house there was a lawn that might have come from the giant looms of some super-velvet-maker; and below her was a little natural harbor that had been extended and reinforced by huge granite breakwaters; and lying in the harbor were two sailboats and three motor launches, and the gracefully slender ninety-foot power-yacht, the *Myra*, which in a week or two was to begin its daily task of carrying the male Harrisons to and from the city, doing the forty miles in a little over an hour.

As she realized what it all signified, Jennie drew a slow, thrilled breath. She was Jennie Malone! . . .



And yet she belonged here — they were glad to have her here! . . .

She made her way down an easy pathway and seated herself upon the bright sand behind a huge boulder. Her eyes fixed upon the quiet, rippling Sound, which the westering sun was transmuting into a giant sheet of hammered copper, she sat considering. Her life, she realized, had now fully begun a new phase; she was now out upon a larger stage; she had at last definitely entered another world — she was farther removed than ever, and more definitely removed, from the world which contained her father and her earlier friends. And she realized that, for the future, the management of her life was wholly in her hands. This had been the case before, yes; but in school there had been prescribed grooves which had held her toward prescribed and proper ends. Here, and from now on, there were no grooves. Her future, whether she succeeded or failed, rested entirely with herself — with her cleverness, her skill, her caution, her watchful control of herself, her tactful handling of others. She felt strangely alone in this new world — and yet she felt exhilaratingly strong.

She considered what, under these new circumstances, should be her plan. She thought and thought — the dying sun flared more ruddily upon the Sound — but she could devise, in detail, no concrete course of action: just exactly what she should do, just exactly what might happen to her, lay behind the glory-tinted veil of youth's great to-morrow. But a general plan she did decide upon, and of it her soul took a determined grip: she was going up, far, far up, in this new world of which she was now an accepted part. Her method of doing this would be to turn events as they came to pass, and per-

sons as they touched her life, all to her advantage — and perhaps she might so manage as to bring some events into being.

Also she perceived that her immediate career was to be founded, in some measure — how large or small she could as yet not estimate — upon the Harrisons. She must study them, and study to please them; and particularly did she decide, as she turned away from the dimming sun-path, that she must win Mrs. Harrison. No one else, perhaps, could so greatly help her.

As the days of seeming quiet passed, Jennie's real attention was fixed more and more upon the Harrison family. Mrs. Harrison was of first importance, yes; but irresistibly she found herself giving most study to Kenneth. Since the evening of the theater-party, when Kenneth had so frankly admired her, her mind had been constantly turning to him. He was interesting, he was more finished than any man she had ever known — but, on the other hand, Sue had spoken of him flip-pantly, disparagingly. What was he really like? He came out four times during Jennie's first two weeks at Silver Bluffs, and little by little his portrait grew. Some of the details which filled out the portrait Jennie learned from Sue, some from his mother, some she saw or surmised — and some few she did not learn until much later. But presently the real Kenneth was completed upon her mind's canvas.

This real Kenneth was more of a person than Sue had indicated; very much more, indeed. Jennie felt that Sue, influenced by the distorting intimacy of family life, which may make one see the large thing as small or the small as great, had been unjust to Kenneth, had underestimated him. Kenneth, as Jennie at length judged

him, was, in a worldly sense at least, the bright star of the family. From the best houses invitations warmly beckoned him; he really was considered a big business man for one so young; he was one of the younger men that men of large affairs had their eyes fixed upon. In short, he was, not so much because of his father's wealth or because of his position in his father's business, as because of the impression he created through his own personality, heir apparent to a lordly place.

And another great detail: Kenneth worked much harder than he seemed to work. Like so many of the younger generation of business men who go in for a social life, he worked at a killing pace and for killingly long hours. It was nothing unusual for him to remain in his office until nine, having his dinner sent in — then dress for a ball, and leave it at two or three o'clock — then have a cold bath and get into a dressing-gown and work and plan until six — then have an hour or two of sleep and be at the office again at nine. He had time for everything: but during his hours of work he did not permit himself one wasted second — and during his hours of pleasure no one seemed more careless of time.

The completed portrait was, indeed, a fascinating figure. During these days when she was developing the portrait of Kenneth, she was also trying to determine what Mrs. Harrison beneath her pleasant exterior was really like — and she was also trying to press forward her main business which was, of course, the thorough winning of Mrs. Harrison. This plan had one result she had not taken into calculation: she found herself warming to Sue's mother more and more — Mrs. Harrison seemed so kindly, so unpretentious, so

unassertive, yet so unquestionably a person of consequence.

One Friday afternoon when Jennie had been at Silver Bluffs for two weeks — Sue had motored away to a tea — Mrs. Harrison and Jennie wandered off together, and finally brought up in a little sunken rose garden. Mrs. Harrison, her hands in large gloves, troweled for a time with loving care about the roots of her rosebushes, keeping up a pleasant inconsequential conversation with Jennie in her richly modulated voice. Then she discarded trowel and gloves and drew Jennie down into a bench beside her.

"Excuse me," she said, smiling, and lifted off Jennie's hat. "Please don't mind — I just feel like having a good look at you, dear."

A bit startled and frightened, Jennie gazed back into the steady blue eyes. She noted how, in the gracious shadow of the wide garden hat, Mrs. Harrison's face was almost girlish, how her fine, corn-colored hair showed hardly a thread of gray, though half of it was white: just then she looked more like a ripened and thoughtful older sister of Sue than her mother.

Presently Mrs. Harrison reached over and put a soft hand on Jennie's dark hair. "I like you very much, my dear," she said gently.

Jennie was so taken aback that she hardly knew what to reply. "I — I don't see why," she stammered.

"You are so simple and unaffected and generous."

"Am I?"

"Indeed you are, my dear."

"But, Mrs. Harrison — I'm poor — I'm nobody — nothing."

"You are yourself," the other returned with soft

emphasis. "That's being something very fine, indeed, to be simply and sincerely and honestly yourself."

Jennie felt a spasm of guilt as she gazed into those kindly blue eyes. If Mrs. Harrison only knew!

"I wish," continued Mrs. Harrison, "that I were going to see a lot of you in the future — I don't mean weeks or months, I mean years."

"Why?" breathed Jennie.

"I feel that beneath your gentleness there is strength and character," the soft, grave voice went on. "I feel that you are going to grow up into a splendid woman, and that you will be a helpful influence to those whose fortune it may be closely to touch your life. I'd like to be near you to watch you grow."

Jennie had a dim secondary impression that the grave voice had spoken evasively, or at least had uttered only part of the speaker's full thought. But her dominant sense was of mixed triumph and bewilderment. She had won Mrs. Harrison! She could count on Mrs. Harrison's support in whatever larger plan she and the future might evolve! Her whole being pulsed expectantly. . . . But there were those strange words the grave voice had spoken about her growing into a splendid woman, being a helpful influence. Such ideas were entirely outside Jennie's speculations concerning herself. In fact, she did not quite understand. She caught a quick breath, but she did not speak. In silence the two sat gazing eye into eye, Mrs. Harrison's hand still upon Jennie's dark hair. . . .

They were still in this attitude when a voice sounded from above. "Hello — there you are at last!"

They looked up. On the retaining wall of the little



garden, in a long motor coat of raw-silk, stood Gloria Raymond.

They rose, and Mrs. Harrison stepped forward as Gloria swished down the stone stairway.

"Why, Gloria — what a surprise!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrison. "Where did you come from?"

"Home — of course."

"You motored out?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's kind of you to drop in on us. I hope you can spare the time to stay to tea."

"I can stay even longer than that," said Gloria easily.

"Yes?" Mrs. Harrison was puzzled.

"I've come for a month or so," Gloria explained.

"Why — Gloria!"

"It's all right, is n't it? You know you invited me to come."

"But — but, Gloria," ejaculated Mrs. Harrison, "it was six weeks ago that I asked you. And you never answered me."

"Did n't I? I intended to. I'm sorry — I guess I'm sometimes awfully careless." She spoke in the assured, confident tone of one who has always had her own way and whose right to that way has never been questioned. "But I'm sure there's some place in your house you can tuck me away, and any room will do for my maid."

Mrs. Harrison had recovered herself. "Why, of course, it's perfectly all right, Gloria." She slipped an arm about Jennie's waist and drew her forward. "Jennie, I think you know Gloria Raymond, don't you?"

Jennie did not answer; she waited for Gloria to make the first move. Gloria was autocratic and self-centered, but she had a quick eye for worldly values; and the

hand she had seen on Jennie's hair and the arm now about her waist informed her that this was a very differently placed Jennie from the crude and friendless girl who had first appeared at Braithewood Hall. She promptly extended her hand.

"Oh, yes, Jennie and I were in school together for two years. I'm glad to see you again, Jennie."

Gloria had never been so friendly as to call her "Jennie" before. Jennie took the hand. There was no pressure in Gloria's clasp and Jennie returned none. Neutrality was the best that could be said of their relationship this moment. But Jennie realized that they were now to be much and intimately together, and with her habit of always questioning, always peering ahead, for an instant her mind flashed forward in an endeavor to guess what the character of their relationship was to be in the future. In the past they had fought physically, as boys fight. But they were now both young women, and were out in the fine world. That relationship might continue to be the neutrality of the present moment. Or it might, again, be fight. And if fight, of what sort? — and when? — and how?

## CHAPTER XV

### GLORIA LAYS SIEGE

AS they returned to the house, Gloria talking in that assured manner which took everything for granted, Jennie noted a perturbed look flit across Mrs. Harrison's face like the brief shadows of an earthward-fluttering leaf. Jennie had her surmise as to the meaning of that shadow; and an hour later, when Sue came into her room and sat stiffly upright on the edge of her bed, her surmise had partial confirmation.

When the amiable Sue was indignant, there had to be good reason; and Sue was indignant now. "You know Gloria Raymond is here?" she demanded.

"Yes," said Jennie.

"Of all the nerve!" flamed the even-tempered Sue. "When mother asked her, it was a situation where mother could n't help inviting her without being rude. And Gloria paid no attention to the invitation — and to-day she walks in on us without a word, just as though she owned the world! I tell you, to act like that, she certainly does think she's *it*!"

Jennie made no response.

"Oh, I know why she's done it," Sue went on. "Some other plan which she liked better has suddenly gone wrong, and she promptly came to us as the next best thing. . She's a sweet child, is n't she! — and it's a delightful compliment to us, is n't it!"

Again Jennie made no reply. Sue was now glaring. For an instant she was silent, then she burst out again.

"And she's not here to see us at all. I told you she'd

broken her engagement, and had started in to try to pick up things again with Kenneth. She's after Kenneth, and for her own reasons she's decided to be right on the job. That's why she's here! Wait and see — and just watch how that girl performs!"

At the close of the afternoon Kenneth arrived for the week-end, Billy Grayson with him. When they all met at dinner Jennie at once perceived that Sue's statement of the main reason for Gloria's coming was correct. And the correctness of that statement was even more apparent when, after dinner, the young people started dancing in the great living-room, Sue and Jennie alternating at the piano. There were no lost motions in Gloria's courtship, no indirection due to maidenly reserve or even to a pretended desire of being sought. She went straight and undisguised for Kenneth, just as she went for every other thing on which her will or fancy settled — with the confident air that it was hers by right, and that no one would presume to deny her.

Jennie, watching, had to admit that she knew of no one else who could carry off that manner half so well: if Gloria were not actually a beauty, with her large, proud eyes and her dark hair which she still wore bobbed, she at least had the prestige of beauty-ship which comes from being frequently described and published as a beauty in the society periodicals and in the picture supplements of the Sunday papers; and further, her manner, and also the impression she made, had behind them the undeniable reality of her social position and her fortune. Only a queen, her queenliness unquestioned, and herself fully conscious of it, would have dared be so direct, so openly possessive.

As for herself, Jennie swiftly discerned that Kenneth

liked and admired her much the same as he had on the night of the first theater-party and on the occasions of his recent visits home. But that was all. To the swift, appropriating method of Gloria he seemed almost instantly to begin to succumb. He plainly liked her, was plainly flattered by her definite preference for him: and, indeed, was there human reason why he should not be — considering that she was a striking figure in herself, and considering all the worldly advantages of which she was the living summary?

Watching this game, Jennie was for a time resentful in Kenneth's behalf. He was altogether too fine, too worth-while, for Gloria. But presently she regarded it all more philosophically; she did n't like Gloria, and she did like Kenneth — but she could n't help it, and it was none of her business.

Sunday afternoon brought two surprises to Jennie which made her forget the affair between Gloria and Kenneth. The lesser of these came when Slim Jackson, known here under his professional name of "Jackson Holt," drove up in the smartest of roadsters. The surprise was not Slim's arrival or his acquaintance with the family; her talk with him on the Astor roof was explanation for this. The surprise was that he already knew Gloria Raymond, and, moreover, seemed to know her rather well. But as Jennie thought this fact over, it did not seem so strange. Kenneth had told her that Slim was received almost everywhere, and Slim, with his curious mixture of self-confidence and mockery at his success, had corroborated this statement of his social entrée.

Jennie was aware that Slim was covertly watching her; and presently, when he was apart with her for a moment, he whispered:



"I say, Jen, you sure have landed big with Mrs. Harrison. Keep it up, kid! I'm no slouch — is there any way I can help you?"

"No."

"Maybe I can — who knows? And if I can, just slip me the word."

"Thanks, Slim" — but she had time for no more, for Kenneth called to him, and the two young men and Gloria drove off to an afternoon dance at a neighboring house.

A little later Sue and young Grayson were playing tennis, and Jennie was sitting with Mr. and Mrs. Harrison on the front piazza which looked down upon the tiny harbor — Jennie talking with Mrs. Harrison, and Mr. Harrison going half-sleepily through the Sunday papers — when the second and greater surprise came. The carriage entrance and the broad turn in the drive were on the other side of the house. Along the brick walk from around the corner, both in motor dust-coats, walked Harry Edwards and with him a tall, bulky man. The appearance of Harry gave her a start, but it was the other man who brought her to her feet, a hand going involuntarily to her heart, sudden fear clutching at her throat. For the second man was Sam Conway: he knew her father well — she had seen him often during the far-gone days down at the Pekin — and in those days he must have seen her, too. Would he recognize her? It was too late now to try to slip out of sight, so she stood waiting, palpitant with suspense, supporting herself with one palm against a white fluted pillar, while first the two older men greeted each other, and then Sam Conway bowed over Mrs. Harrison's hand.

And then Mr. Harrison turned toward her. "And this, Mr. Conway," he said, "is our guest, Miss Miller."

Sam Conway advanced and held out his hand. He had the politician's habit of handshaking, and he made much of it. Jennie could barely stand, but she laid her hand in his, and managed to look up into his face, which despite his sixty years was still full and florid — a face whose ever-ready geniality had secured for him, in addition to "Big Sam," the more intimate title among his adherents of "Smiling Sam" Conway.

"I'm very glad to meet you, Miss Miller," he said heartily, his smiling gaze full upon her.

His shrewd, frank-seeming eyes showed no recognition of her; she knew, for certain, that he had no idea who she really was. Such relief swept into her that it was well her free hand was still against the pillar. But instantly her quick mind understood; to her, in the old days, Sam Conway had been one of the large figures of her world, gazed on occasionally and from afar; to him, she had never been more than one of the unrememberable thousands of children he was forever meeting and complimenting parents upon.

"Thank you, Mr. Conway," she managed to say.

"I am very glad, indeed, to meet you, Miss Miller," he repeated in his voice, so resonant with heartiness. He pressed her hand, held it for a moment — it was his instinct to prolong a handshake when it was part of an introduction — and gazed with his steady geniality down into her dark eyes. Then he loosed her hand and turned away.

And thus, with most perfunctory words, these two met and parted — never fated really to meet each other again: and neither with even a dream of how, though

never meeting, the workings of life were to make each a profound influence upon the destiny of the other.

After a moment the two older men withdrew into Mr. Harrison's study off the library, Mr. Harrison with keen interest, but also with reserve. This relationship with Conway had been good business, but he had never cared to have the relationship extend beyond the boundaries of business affairs.

"Any more news about those recreation pier contracts, Conway?"

"I've landed those all right — though we can't make it public yet."

"Good! It's mighty thoughtful of you to drive out and tell me."

"That's not what I drove out for, Jim. I could have 'phoned you that — or let it wait till I saw you in town."

"Then why did you come out?"

"Oh, Harry Edwards and I were just out driving, and I thought I might as well drop in and tell you about a little thing I learned last night."

"Yes?"

"I guess you know the twist things have taken between me and Larry Murdock?"

Mr. Harrison nodded.

"Well, I learned last night that there is no patching things up; it's now got to be a fight to the finish. And Sam Conway's not always a safe man to buck." For an instant his genial face tightened grimly; his look gave an almost startling emphasis to his last sentence; then his features were pleasant again. "But we might as well face this fact, Jim; if Murdock does what he thinks he's going to do, he'll put me down and out."

"I'm sorry — I wish I could help you — but you

know I've always said I could take no part, directly or indirectly, in your political affairs — and particularly not in your feuds within your own party."

"I'm not asking you to — yet," the other said blandly. "I'm merely asking you to consider, if I'm put down and out, what that will mean to Mr. James Harrison, of Harrison and Company, in a business way."

Mr. Harrison looked his question.

"It will mean that all the contracts I've been able to swing to the firm, I'll not be able to swing any more, and that those contracts will go some place else. It will mean that about fifty per cent of your total business will be suddenly sliced off. That ought to interest you."

It did. Mr. Harrison looked very gravely at Conway for a long moment. "But I don't see how I can help out. As I said, I never did mix in that end of things."

"Yes, you always were respectable, Jim." If there was irony or acrimony or menace in Conway's mind his even voice did not show it. "You took the business I turned in, and never asked questions about how I got it; you never wanted to know. And I admit it paid me to have you clean and respectable. Guess I've been fairly square myself, as men average up. But now if you don't want your business lopped in two, and if I don't want to lose everything, we've got to get down to brass tacks, — and you've got to come in quick and help me."

"How?"

"Use your respectable connections. Figure out how they can make it worth Murdock's while if he leaves me alone — or how they can squeeze him if he does n't."

For the next half-hour, the two men discussed this proposition. In the meantime, out on the piazza, Mrs. Harrison, a hand on the shoulder of Jennie who sat at

her feet on the steps, had assumed the tactful hostess's duty of starting conversation between Jennie and Harry Edwards.

"So you two have met before," had been her first remark after the men had withdrawn.

"Yes," replied Jennie. "We met on the Astor roof that first night Kenneth took us out. Mr. Edwards and I had a dance together."

"Oh, then you really know each other."

"Yes — a little," Jennie admitted.

Mrs. Harrison chatted on for a few minutes, then arose. She recognized the gulf time had eroded between forty-five and twenty, and it was part of her idea of human relationships that the middle-aged should not intrude unnecessarily upon the interests natural to the young.

"I must give orders about tea, so you'll please excuse me. I think you'll find Sue and Billy Grayson playing tennis."

Jennie and Harry strolled off together, but not toward the tennis courts. Presently they brought up at the tiny beach, with its huge boulder, where two weeks before Jennie had communed with herself and had readjusted and added to her patient plans for her enlarging life.

Harry glanced about. Their seclusion was perfect.

"I was down at the Pekin last night and saw your father," he began.

"How was he?" she asked quickly.

"In good health — but in an awful temper at me."

"Why?"

"You see I told him about my meeting you the other night, and about my threatening you."

"What did he say?"



"Toned down and made elegant it was to the effect that he'd smash my everlasting head if I messed things up for you. And he'd do it, too. I told him I was going to behave." Harry's frank blue eyes fixed upon her in grave reflection. "I thought about it last night as he sat in his little office with his big hands gripped in front of him: Black Jerry down there in the Pekin, asking nothing for himself — you up here, one of the regular swells. He's a strange man, Black Jerry — but believe me, he's all right!"

Jennie did not answer. Her mind saw the set look on her father's dark face when, four years before, he had sent her out of his life; saw that set, goggled face as it gazed unwaveringly at her two weeks since while she had delivered her valedictory address. A fierce hunger surged up within her; pretending to gaze at a passing steamer, she turned her head to hide the tears which sprang into her eyes. A moment went by; then she deftly managed to wipe her eyes unnoticed.

"How are you getting on in business, Harry?" she asked, her eyes still seaward.

"Fine! With the affairs Sam Conway makes the firm put in my hands, I'm going right up!" His tone was bitter. "Of course I'm not within a million miles of where you are; I saw how strong you are with the Harrisons from the way Mrs. Harrison treated you. And Kenneth Harrison" — with a flare of jealousy — "he's right here on the ground where he can see you whenever he likes. I suppose he's gone on you!"

"Don't be foolish!" she said sharply but kindly. "I told you before that I meant nothing to him. And just now he can't see anything but another girl."

"I hope he marries her, and quick!" Harry exclaimed

fervently. He put his hands on her shoulders. "Look at me, Jennie!" She obeyed; the blue eyes, so boyishly frank, were ashine with determination and worshipful desire. "Jennie — I'm working hard, just for you! And I'm going to make good, in a big way, just for you! I can wait — I can work — I'm going to make myself seem worth-while even to you — and I'm going to have you in the end!"

She was moved by his ardent directness. "You're a dear, dear fool, Harry," she said softly. "But, Harry, it would n't be fair if I did n't tell you that it's no use for you to feel that way about me. I'll never feel that way about you — never, never. So forget me, and just think about your work."

"What you say now is n't going to change me," he returned. "My love for you is going right on. It's the biggest thing in my life! I like my work, yes — I see a career ahead that I can be proud of. But if you were taken out of my life, Jennie" — he spoke with a tenderness that was fierce, exalted, even reckless — "if you were taken out of my life, I would n't give a damn for any career! I would n't give a damn!"

"You're a dear romanticist, Harry — you're a dear, dear boy! But" — she shook her head decidedly — "but you really don't care that much for me — and your dream about finally making me love you, that's never coming true."

"Oh, yes, it is!" he declared dominantly.

"Oh, no, it's not!" she retorted.

Silent, they gazed in straight-eyed defiance at each other, almost belligerent in their youthful confidence. At that moment each believed that for him the future was to be determined and controlled by his own will;

each saw the future, in its general outlines, as clearly defined and comparatively simple. Full of the pride and confidence of youth, they never guessed that they might be the playthings of, the mere clay to be shaped by, forces which they did not even perceive, much less take into account: the forces which existed unknown to them within themselves — the slow forces brought into being by Black Jerry and Uncle George — the forces of still other wills — the forces of that great complex organism, life, all human life, which may stretch forth its influence out of unsuspected regions, and perhaps swiftly, perhaps imperceptibly, alter all man-conceived designs.

Presently the rigidity of their self-will and determination relaxed and they smiled at each other — smiles that were warmed by the coppery sun-glow thrown up from the wrinkled water. They turned and strolled back to the house where now, on the piazza, sat the Harrisons and all their guests; and such was their manner of casual friendliness that to all, save to Slim Jackson alone, they seemed no more than mere acquaintances who just now had met for only the second time.

## CHAPTER XVI

### JENNIE IS SET A TASK

**T**HAT Sunday evening while Jennie, at the piano, was softly playing old melodies to the family, Kenneth and Gloria wandered out of the great living-room into the library. After a time Kenneth returned and whispered to his mother; one by one the family quietly withdrew, until Jennie became aware that she was playing to an empty room. Rather pleased with this solitariness she slipped through the soft night out to the end of the pier, and alone under the clear June stars, her mind swung to and centered upon herself and her position.

All things considered, she was satisfied. She felt that she had strengthened and solidified her position, so that it was the firm base for new advance movements. She had a sense that some great forward action was just before her; it was a very definite sense, and she tried to peer into the future and see what it was that was going to befall her or what it was that she was going to do. But the future would not open to her.

When she returned to the house the family was still behind the closed door of the library. As she went on up to bed she wondered what the council could be about. But the following morning its nature was unmistakable to her, for when father and son started for their train, Kenneth kissed Gloria good-bye before every one, and Mr. Harrison, holding her hand, and also kissing her, said heartily: "I'm mighty glad about it, Gloria — mighty glad!"

Sue maneuvered Jennie over to the tennis courts and drew her down upon a bench. "I suppose you can guess what's happened?" she demanded.

"Having eyes I could hardly help having a guess," Jennie replied. "When are they going to announce it?"

"They don't want to announce it for quite a while yet — that is, Gloria does n't. It would n't sound very well coming so soon after the breaking-off of her other engagement." Then Sue flamed out: "Did n't I tell you she was a quick worker! I never saw such nerve!"

"You don't seem to be wholly pleased with it, Sue," Jennie returned calmly.

"I should say I'm not pleased with it! Nor is mother. Mother and I had a long talk about it, last night, and we're both sick — simply sick!"

"Why? I thought Gloria was quoted very high in the marriage market."

"She is — by some people. But she's selfish — she never thinks about anything except what she wants to do and what suits her — she'll never give one minute's thought to what is best for Kenneth, she'll be simply a drag which will keep him from becoming the big man he ought to be!" Sue was silent a moment, then she added abruptly: "Besides, it is n't in her to care for one man very long — she's clearly proved that. I tell you, it's just going to turn out an awful mess!"

"If all that is true, then how could a man who knows the world as well as Kenneth get drawn into it?"

"Oh, any clever woman that tries can get around Kenneth," Sue replied contemptuously. "Besides, Kenneth since he was a half-witted boy has been keen about Gloria. That made it easy for her."



"But even if you and your mother are not pleased, your father seems happy enough."

"Oh, father and mother have different ideas about a lot of things. He's a business man, and he can't help seeing this from a business point of view. And it may seem all right in a business way; it will probably give Kenneth control of an awful lot of additional capital. But —" and Sue's face set with determination — "I'm not going to have it, and mother's not going to have it, if we can help it! That's what we're thinking about — how to stop it."

"I'd think your mother could do that by telling Kenneth what a marriage with Gloria would mean to him, and telling him she did n't want him to marry Gloria."

"It would n't work. First, Kenneth would n't believe it. And then, telling Kenneth not to do a thing is the surest way to make him do it. I've already told you that. We've got to do something else — we've got to handle him indirectly." Sue regarded Jennie with an imploring yet determined air. "Jennie, you've got to help us!"

"I!" exclaimed Jennie. "How?"

"I don't know, but you're clever and you ought to think of some way. I've thought of one thing, and you might try that until you think of something else."

"What is it?"

"Gloria has lots of money and she's pretty much of somebody out in society, but in every other way you outclass her. You are more clever than she is, and you can do more things. Kenneth likes you a lot; if you half tried you could make him like you a lot more — you might cool down his enthusiasm for Gloria. You wade

right in and make yourself as interesting as possible. That'll start something, and later we may think of something else."

Jennie stared. "I say, Sue, you are not altogether lacking in what you said Gloria had so much of — nerve!" She shook her head. "I never have hired out as a flirt, and as a profession it does n't appeal to me, and besides, I know I'd make a mess of it. No, thank you."

"But, Jennie," Sue urged, "mother and I are desperate about this. We've got to break it up somehow. You've simply got to help, Jennie — you've simply got to help!"

"Why not try to talk Gloria out of it? There she is headed this way with a racket."

Sue gave a glance toward the house. Sure enough, Gloria was approaching, all in white, wearing a wide hat tied with a veil beneath her chin — a hat strikingly handsome in itself, but chosen for its distinction rather than for its fitness for the active sport which her racket announced.

"I can't stand to talk to her now," breathed Sue. "Good-bye —"

"No, you don't; you're going to stay right here." And Jennie, catching her arm, drew her back to the bench.

"Where are you going, Sue?" asked Gloria when she had sauntered up to the pair.

Jennie was prompt to answer in Sue's behalf; she spoke in a calm voice: "Sue was hurrying off to get into her tennis togs to have a match with you, Gloria."

"I'm glad you kept her." Gloria sat down, an elbow on the back of the bench, and regarded Jennie coolly —

with more of her native arrogance than she had shown thus far during her visit. "I've been waiting to have a little talk with you."

"I appreciate your desire to give me your confidence, Gloria," Jennie said evenly.

"It was n't to give you my confidence that I wanted to see you!" was the sharp reply.

"I think I'd better go." And again Sue tried to rise.

"I'd rather have you stay," said Gloria, "and know just what it's about."

"Yes, please do stay." And Jennie once more drew the unwilling Sue back upon the bench.

"I guess, Jennie," Gloria continued coolly, "that you know about Kenneth and me."

"I guess every one does who saw the parting scene this morning."

Gloria's dark eyes, straight upon Jennie, gleamed imperiously. "What I wanted to say to you won't take many words. You've been playing around a lot with Kenneth. There's to be no more of that."

There was no longer any doubt in Jennie as to what was to be her relationship with Gloria. They were to fight. But she controlled herself, and spoke evenly.

"If I've played with Kenneth, it's been because he's asked me to. If you want this stopped, why don't you order Kenneth to stop asking me?"

"I guess I know the way to manage this!"

"And I guess you know, then," Jennie taunted in her even voice, "that if you were to order Kenneth to stop asking me, he'd ask me all the more. Well, you ought to know, then, that trying to order me is just about as effective."

"You mean you won't do it?"

"I'm not saying, Gloria, for I don't know. But I shall do just about what happens to please me."

"I gave you your chance to keep out of this on your own accord!" Gloria flamed at her. "Now you'll have nothing to do with it! You'll be put out!"

"Yes?" Jennie queried. "And how?"

"I shall inform Mrs. Harrison that you are an uncongenial, unendurable person to me," Gloria answered furiously. "As I am her daughter-in-law to be, there'll be no way out of it except for her to ask you to go."

Jennie regarded her steadily.

"Well — are you going to make me do that?" Gloria demanded.

"Gloria, you're a dear, sweet child — but just a trifle spoiled," Jennie returned. "You know you need a spanking, Gloria — you really do. And you know I could give you a spanking, too. The only thing that restrains me is consideration for Mrs. Harrison: it might humiliate her a little for her prospective daughter-in-law to be spanked in public. But if I should change my mind and decide to spank you, it will be a strictly high-class job — none better of its kind."

Gloria was speechless; she could only glare.

"Or perhaps I might save your going to Mrs. Harrison," Jennie continued in her even voice. "I might go to her myself, tell her of your objection to me, tell her of your threat, and offer to remove myself. I know that would make her simply adore you. Now, run along, Gloria — I want to be alone to think it all over. You really might as well go, for Sue is n't going to play tennis with you, and neither am I — and, besides, my dear, forgive me for saying it, you look just a bit silly with that big hat flopping about your ears when you're chas-

ing shots around the court which you never get. I'm sure Kenneth must have noticed how funny you looked when you were playing with him yesterday. I'd go put on something else, Gloria — I really would."

Gloria was on her feet, trembling. "You — you —" But she choked, and could get no more out.

"You little Wyoming runt," supplied Jennie pleasantly. "I'd forgotten it — but I see you remember all about that little debate we had in the squash court at Braithewood four years ago."

Gloria whirled about, and furiously crossed the tennis lawn toward the house.

"Jennie!" breathed Sue in amazement. "Jennie!" And then: "Jennie — I can't understand — most of the time you're so gentle you seem almost afraid of everybody — and then sometimes you wake up and simply eat people raw."

"Don't talk now, Sue," Jennie returned. "I want to think."

Though she had spoken composedly enough to Gloria, that had been only because she had learned the great value and advantage of self-control; within she was blazing as fiercely as on that day of long ago when in unleashed fury she had thrown Gloria to the floor of the squash court and sat upon her stomach. She wanted to strike — strike fiercely and hurtingly! . . . And then in her swift thinking it came upon her that nothing she could do, provided she could do it, would be such effective and sweet revenge as balking Gloria's engagement to Kenneth. That would be wonderful.

And then she saw another advantage in this revenge. If she should help break the engagement, and do it in an unobtrusive manner, yet so that Mrs. Harrison per-



ceived that she had done it — why, nothing else could possibly so strengthen her position with Mrs. Harrison!

She was smiling half-humorously when she looked again at Sue. "I don't especially blame you for not long-ing to have Gloria as a sister-in-law. As I told you, I've never hired out as a flirt before, and I don't believe I have any special gifts for that trade — but if you still want me to try, I'll see what I can do."

"Oh, Jennie — if you only will —"

"Wait a second. There's a condition. Kenneth will have eyes and time for only Gloria. I can do nothing if I try it all alone. You and your mother must help. Whenever Kenneth is at home, you and your mother must manage to occupy Gloria's attention from time to time — that will create a sort of vacancy and make an opportunity for Kenneth to be polite to me."

Sue promised. That evening Kenneth came home; he had arranged to commute by the railroad until the Myra was in active service. After dinner there was informal dancing in the living-room; Gloria danced two numbers with Kenneth, and then in a most natural manner Mrs. Harrison drew her into conversation.

"You two dance," Sue said to Jennie and Kenneth. "It's my turn to play."

And so they began to dance. Outwardly Jennie was shy, even deprecatory; inwardly she was afire with the determination to make herself as attractive as possible to Kenneth. She danced with all her skill, all her lithe freedom — yet ever trying to give Kenneth the sense that he was leading her. She saw that he was delighted with her as a partner, and a glance from Sue spoke eloquently of the contrast between her dancing and Gloria's. The one-step with their interpolated variations

at an end, Sue begged Jennie to sing; and Jennie, in her warm mezzo, which the really excellent master at Braithewood had done much to develop and bring under her control, sang "Habanera" from "Carmen," after that Schubert's "Ave Maria." She saw the baleful displeasure in Gloria's face, and that was inspiration for her to outdo herself. After "Ave Maria" she refused to sing again, and insisted that the dancing be resumed and offered to play in Sue's stead.

Kenneth crossed and asked Gloria to dance, but Gloria's wild resentment prompted her to reply, with a fairly well-managed show of indifference, that she was engaged in conversation with his mother. So Kenneth danced again with Jennie, and as the end of the dance brought them to the door, wide open to the night, Kenneth, with a "Let's have just a minute of fresh air," swung her through and out upon the piazza, and drawing her hand through his arm led her down upon the walk.

"I thought you were wonderful that night on the Astor roof," he enthused, "but now you seem even more wonderful! You are the best dancer I ever danced with!"

"Oh, hardly that," she laughed. "But if I dance a little better than most girls, it's just because I like it a little better."

"If you like it that way, then dancing's one thing we'll never disagree about." He spoke lightly, yet there was real interest beneath his words. "But the way you sing! I did n't know before that you sang. You could do a lot with that voice if you cared to. I know, for I've helped back one or two musical plays — and, believe me, no careful pawnbroker would loan more than ten cents upon the voices of most of the musical comedy

prima donnas. You're uncovering new marvels each day. What else can you do?"

"Nothing, I guess. And what you've spoken about does n't seem remarkable to me. I just happen to like to do those things — that's all there is about it."

They were now a considerable distance from the house. "You can't explain it away — you can't make yourself commonplace — you're simply wonderful!" He halted, and laid a hand upon the hand resting on his arm. "I think you are simply wonderful!"

"And do you know what I think about you?" she asked in a grave voice.

"What?"

"I think you are holding my hand."

He started at this directness, then laughed softly. "Why, I rather thought that same thing myself."

"Does that mean that you are about to propose to me?"

Again he started. "Why?"

"I just learned that you were engaged to Gloria. I wondered if two engagements a day was your regular allowance."

The moonlight showed him a mischievous gleam in her face. "You look demure, but I always said there was a little devil in you," he exclaimed in a wry but pleased tone — "a sharp little devil — a nice clever little devil."

"The little devil asks me to thank you. But before you go ahead and really propose to me, I want to congratulate you about Gloria. I hope you will both be very happy."

"And I hope that you and Gloria are going to be very good friends."

"I'm willing to be friends with Gloria. But it all depends upon Gloria. And whether Gloria wants to be real friends, that rather depends upon whether you make it known to Gloria that you'd like things that way."

"Oh, I'll make that clear to Gloria. You're Sue's best friend — we should all be good friends — and you know I like you a lot."

"There'll not be much chance of our ever being friends if we stay out here any longer on the first day of Gloria's engagement." She gently freed her hand. "I think we'd better go in."

Inside, Kenneth advanced to Gloria. "Jennie was just congratulating us," he said. "I told her that I hoped that you and she — all of us in fact — were always going to be the best of friends."

Jennie seemed frank-eyed, modest, waiting for Gloria to make the advance.

With a control that was attained with difficulty Gloria replied:

"I'm sure we shall be."

But later, alone on the stairway as they went to bed, she glowered furiously at Jennie.

Jennie inquired in a taunting whisper:

"Did you order Mrs. Harrison to invite me to leave?"

Choking, Gloria hurried by her without an answer.

The following evenings there was a similar procedure. Never before had Jennie consciously tried to win the attention of a man, and the novelty of the experience added piquancy to the more serious purposes which were involved in her plan. And it seemed to her that she was partially succeeding; it seemed that Kenneth was admiring her more and more.

And then a new element entered this affair. She was glad when Kenneth came home at the end of the day, she gladdened at the touch of his hand, she was tremblingly happy when swinging in his arms in the dance. She awoke suddenly to this uncalculated interest, and a question asked itself sharply of her: was this relationship, which she had plunged into almost as a matter of cold-blooded business, was this intimacy begetting a result she had never dreamed of? — was she beginning really to care? . . . She did not let herself answer; she put the question from her.

Nevertheless, this change in her, whatever its nature or degree, intensified and justified her intention. Kenneth was, indeed, altogether too fine: any course was righteous that would save him.

After a few days Jennie perceived that the course she had been following could not, unaided by other plans, quickly end matters between an engaged couple when the girl had so many substantial worldly attributes as Gloria. There must be an additional plan. She began to consider, and her mind fixed upon one remark Sue had made against Gloria. In this remark her rapidly working mind saw the germ of an idea. The idea grew — it had the potentialities of a big plan, an effective plan, if she could only put it into execution.

On the following Sunday Slim Jackson came out to stay over until Monday. The appearance of Slim upon the scene suggested a new thought which fitted in with her growing plan; and she so maneuvered that she got Slim alone out upon the end of the stone pier.

"What's the big idea, Jen?" he asked.

"Of course you know about Kenneth and Gloria Raymond?"



"Sure. Kenneth told me the news as a dead secret the other day. What's the matter?"

"His mother does n't like the engagement, nor does his sister. So I'm trying to break it off."

"For their sakes?" demanded Slim keenly.

"Yes — and for my own." Almost unconsciously she dropped into the informal phraseology of the days when she and Slim had had the Pekin as their habitat. "Gloria and I don't love each other, and I'd like to jar her off her pedestal. Also, if I could manage to break the engagement off, why, nothing else could make me so solid with Mrs. Harrison — and you know hardly anything can help me so much just now as being solid with Mrs. Harrison."

"You're a selfish, calculating, pretty little animal, but the idea is strictly all right. Why not step in and win him away from her? I've been watching you and Kenneth. It's as plain as four aces that he already cares a lot for you."

"I've been trying that; it's too slow and uncertain. I've thought of a way that will be quick and sure-fire, if it can only be put across. And it's something you might help me in — if you want to."

"You've got me sitting on the edge of my orchestra chair and holding my breath. What happens next?"

"They say Gloria has liked an awful lot of men — she's been engaged four times that I know of — and her being engaged to one man does n't prevent her liking several others at the same time. That may not be the case at the present moment, but, anyhow, that's the kind Gloria is. She's crazy about men — always plural."

"I get you so far. Where do I fit in?"

"Here's my idea: If she's doing now what she's done

before, then while she's engaged to Kenneth, she's also privately flirting with some other man. But telling Kenneth this will have no effect; he's got to see things with his own eyes. If I could find out who the other man is, and if affairs could be so handled that Kenneth could be brought in upon a scene of surreptitious love-making — that would smash things right then and there. Now, you know a lot about the smart and gay life of New York and you know its gossip; you either know, or can find out, who this second man is — if there is such a man. And you can find out where and how they meet. That's where you fit in."

He regarded her steadily for a long space. His narrow gray eyes were just now expressionless beyond showing keen thought. When he finally did speak, he passed over all she had said.

"Have you thought any more about the proposition I made you on the Astor roof — about our teaming up?"

"That's never going to happen, Slim — never," she answered impatiently.

He lifted his shoulders philosophically. "I guess it's up to me to keep on waiting, Jennie — and I'm a good waiter."

"But will you help me?" she demanded.

Again he regarded her thoughtfully for a long space; and though he tried to control his expression, he could not mask the air of one who is swiftly looking far, far ahead, and balancing possibility against possibility.

"Sorry, Jennie — wish I could," he at length said. "But there's nothing I can do — absolutely nothing. And there's no use talking about it."

Jennie was quite taken aback and was bitterly disappointed by this unexpected refusal. But disconcerted

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though she was, she caught the glint of a smile which suddenly broke through the sober regret of Slim's face. For some reason that smile awoke in her a vague suspicion; but not until long, long after was she to learn all which lay behind that brief smile on the pale, keen face of Slim Jackson.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HOW A PLAN WORKED OUT

JENNIE went quietly about, watchful, thinking, planning — and planning all the harder because Slim Jackson, on whom she had counted for aid, or at least for information, had just declared himself unable to give her either. But as the day passed, her design, effective though it had seemed on first contemplating it, began to seem tremendously difficult, even unworkable, because of her inability to get a concrete starting-point. And then circumstances very promptly came to her aid, or appeared to, and simplified and quickened what she had thought would be at the best both slow and complicated.

That evening while all were dancing — a number of young people had motored over to Silver Bluffs to join in this, a few to stay over the night — Jennie caught a covert but significant glance pass between Gloria and Slim when the two seemed to believe no eyes were upon them. That look fairly staggered Jennie. Was it possible — what she had not even thought of before — that Slim himself was one of the men with whom Gloria had flirted as far as a mere flirtation dared go? . . . It was indeed possible! She recalled how admired, how sought after Slim was by the young women of the smarter and more daring social set. And she recalled Slim's unwillingness to help her against Gloria. Here was full explanation of that unwillingness!

She watched them carefully, trying all the while to maintain the appearance of a young girl who had noth-

ing on her mind but the enjoyment of a young girl's pleasure. Presently she saw Slim and Gloria withdraw quietly from the rest and go out the front door. In a moment she had excused herself on the plea of getting a glass of water for herself, passed into the dining-room, and thence through a darkened side entrance out into the grounds. She darted to a corner of the house and peered around it. A score of paces away Slim and Gloria were strolling off into the night.

There was a possibility that they might be saying something revelatory: at any rate, she had to hear. Her only chance of approaching them unheard and unobserved was to avoid the brick walks and cross the lawn; but the lawn was dew-covered, and wet slippers would look very suspicious when she returned to the party within. She drew off her slippers, and carrying them she swiftly made her way across the grass in stockinged feet, dodging from the cover of one dim bush or clump of shrubbery to another — until she saw the figures pause in a side path not half a dozen yards away.

"No one can hear us out here," she heard Gloria remark. "Quick — what did you want?"

"It's like this, Gloria. But listen! Was that somebody?" And Slim moved in Jennie's direction. He took but two or three steps, then paused and flashed a tiny electric torch, no larger than a cigarette case, full upon the bush behind which Jennie was crouching. Jennie dared not move; she was palpitant with the fear of immediate discovery.

But the tiny torch flashed to other bushes. Then it went out, and Slim returned to Gloria.

"Did you see any one?" she whispered.

"It was all my imagination."



"Quick, then — what did you want to tell me?"

His voice was the voice of flattering complaint. "I wanted to tell you that you've been letting me see mighty little of you of late — and that I'm missing it a lot — and that I think I have a real kick coming."

"Oh, you have n't missed me so much. The world's full of other women who —"

"But not full of Glorias!"

"Besides, while I'm staying out here at Silver Bluffs, you know there's no chance to see each other."

"There's got to be a chance, Gloria. I want to see you simply because I want to see you. Also because there's something I simply must talk over with you — and I don't need to say that there's no time for that now. We'd be missed. But I've got to see you."

"When, then — and where — and how?"

"I know Mrs. Harrison is going to try to close the party down at midnight, and everybody who's staying here will be in bed shortly after that. Slip down to the library at two — to play it safe, come at exactly two. I'll be waiting."

"But what for?" she persisted.

"Well — for that —" And drawing her suddenly to him, he kissed her.

"Cut that out, Jackson Holt!" But there was no severe displeasure in her voice. "If that's all, I'll not come."

"But I said I had to talk to you, Gloria — I simply must."

There were two or three sentences of debate, then Jennie heard Gloria say: "All right — at two o'clock, then. Now we'd better get right back to the house."

They moved away. The moment action seemed safe,

Jennie scurried across the lawn to the side of the house, drew her slippers on her dew-soaked feet, passed through the dining-room, and rejoined the party just as Slim and Gloria sauntered in. Jennie did her best to seem light-spirited as before, but all the while she was feverishly thinking and planning. To her conglomerate of earlier motives she now had added a new motive, and she was righteously indignant. It seemed shameless to her for Slim to violate the Harrisons' hospitality and Kenneth's friendship, and for Gloria to treat so lightly the respect due her hostess and her own position. Of a certainty the pair deserved anything and everything that might be brought to befall them.

But how should she handle this situation? She considered the problem all the evening while she apparently had no concern other than her girlish pleasure; but it was not till she was in her room, after midnight, that she could give the situation her undivided mind. Plainly the thing to do was so to manage that the Harrisons, and most particularly Kenneth, should be witnesses to that two o'clock rendezvous in the library. Just how could that best be brought about?

Suddenly a hitherto unperceived danger to herself darted into her mind. If in any way Slim should learn of her part in his exposure he would be certain to strike back by telling all he knew about her. A chill went tingling through her. Did she dare attempt anything at all? . . .

Motionless she sat in the dark, drawn up in a big chair, and tensely studied this big problem, with its new aspect of great risk to herself. She heard her clock strike one — then heard the half-hour sound. Gradually she began to see the plan as workable, and with

danger to herself eliminated. She must manage the affair through Sue, she herself must not in any wise appear a factor in the matter. And it would be wise not even to tell Sue of her suspecting the pair, of her following them, of her eavesdropping; her part must be made to seem simple and innocent.

The general plan decided on, the details came in flashes. She switched on the shaded light at her writing-desk, and with a letter of Gloria's before her, she set about reproducing Gloria's handwriting on a fresh sheet of Silver Bluffs note-paper. It came easy, for the large, bold writing with its sprawling loops was so obvious that it offered no difficulties to the copyist. This was the first time Jennie had exercised her native gift as an imitator of handwriting since the affair of the Morrison check which had brought her into Jefferson Market Court; she had never a thought that she was committing forgery, merely that she was using a safe device to bring two persons to justice.

At a quarter to two she slipped into Sue's room, turned on the lights and awakened her.

"Look here — what's the matter?" demanded Sue with the ill-humor of a broken first-sleep.

"Hush! Talk in a whisper, Sue. To-night I saw a note slipped a man; I was n't supposed to see it. But it looked very suspicious. I saw him glance at it, then put it in a pocket. Afterwards, when I was dancing with him, I saw that the note had worked halfway out of his pocket and — I know it was n't a very honorable thing to do, but I could n't help myself — I managed to get the note without his knowing what I was about. I've been sitting in my room all this while wondering what I should do about it. And I've finally decided

that it's none of my business, and that I should leave it all to you."

"Is that the letter?"

"Yes — but give it back to me."

Sue took the letter, and slowly read aloud the score of words which completely covered one page:

All right — two o'clock to-night in the library — but you've got to be a very good boy and not smoke.

Sue looked up. "It's not signed, but it's Gloria's handwriting!" she exclaimed.

"It looks like it," admitted Jennie.

"And it's not addressed — but it's to a man! And I know it's not Kenneth!" Sue slipped out of bed. "There are three or four other men here to-night — which is the one?" she demanded.

"I don't want to get mixed up in this any further, Sue. That's for you to find out."

"But how?"

Jennie did not answer. She had planned so carefully that the answer was obvious.

"We'll slip down and surprise them — the two of us and mother and Kenneth." Sue's eyes gleamed. "Perhaps Kenneth may see enough to wake him up!"

That was exactly as Jennie had calculated. "But let me have the letter back, Sue. You don't need it."

"Kenneth is skeptical — the letter may be just the thing to convince him he ought to look into this."

Jennie disliked having the letter in other hands, but there was now no avoiding this. Sue got into her dressing gown, switched out her lights, and glided into the hall.

"I'll get mother and Kenneth — we must all be mighty quiet," she whispered. "You wait here."

She disappeared. Minutes passed. The deep-toned clock in the great living-room below slowly sounded two. Then three figures appeared out of the darkness. Without words, with utmost caution, Kenneth leading the way and Jennie hanging well behind, they crept down the stairway like so many black ghosts. And so on to the door of the library, where Kenneth's suddenly stiffened arm halted them.

They could hear low voices.

"I tell you it was a pretty stiff jolt," complained a voice, a man's voice whose owner Jennie alone knew — "your going and getting engaged to Kenneth Harrison just as I was beginning to think you cared for me."

"You surely did n't think I was ever going to become engaged to you?" whispered the other, with mocking audacity.

"Well, so long as you were n't engaged, I had hopes. And I liked it, being the sort of friends we've been."

"It might as well be Kenneth as any other man, as far as you are concerned. And as for having been friends, I suppose we can still be friends, can't we?"

"And see each other?" The whisper was eager. "Now and then when it's safe, I mean?"

"Well, you're seeing me now, are n't you?"

"Gloria!" breathed the man's voice.

There followed silence, which each of the rigid forms at the doorway filled with a mental picture which was more or less similar. Then Kenneth reached for the electric switch and the room instantly became as brilliant as day. On a deep leathern couch sat Gloria in the yellow gown which she had been wearing earlier in the evening, and beside her sat Slim Jackson. Slim's arm was about her, and her head was upon the shoulder of



his evening coat. The pair started, blinked for an instant, then sprang up.

For the briefest moment there was a tableau: the pair in their party clothes, and the quartette in dressing-gowns, staring at each other. Then Kenneth stepped forward, pale with fury. Jennie was relieved to see that he was unarmed; she had feared he might have come down with the conventional pistol of the insulted male.

"Jackson Holt, you're a damned sneak!" he blazed in a voice of controlled fury. "You've got your car here. Five minutes is enough to get your things together. In five minutes I expect you and your car to be leaving!"

Slim Jackson attempted no reply. He merely made a slight bow of acquiescence — but even then his bow was one of rare grace.

"And, Gloria Raymond" — Mrs. Harrison had stepped forward and was speaking now, her kindly face stern with outraged indignation — "I am ashamed that even for a week I had to think of you as my daughter-in-law! You are without honor, or decency, or shame! Your breakfast will be served you in your room; a car will be at the door waiting for you; you will take the earliest train away from here that you can make. And neither I nor any member of my family ever wish to see you or speak to you again!"

Gloria had at first been half-stunned by the impact of this unexpected scene. But now her head was up and she regarded them all with a sneering, almost imperial defiance. There was one thing to be said for Gloria — she was not easily downed.

"All right, I'll be ready for the car — and you can't

make it too early to suit me," she drawled. "I guess what's happened is the best thing that could have happened for me," she added coolly; "it's kept me from being tied up with a second-rate family. And besides, it would n't have been exactly pleasant, having round me a bunch of spies."

This time it was Sue who stepped forward. And Sue was angry.

"Spies!" she cried. "Who do you mean?"

"Your mother and your brother. They've evidently been snooping around and watching me."

"That's a lie, Gloria Raymond!" blazed Sue, who had lost herself in righteous and scornful anger. "They have not been snooping around! Neither of them had the least suspicion of this until ten minutes ago."

"Then how did they find out?"

"I told them — that's how!"

"So, then — you're the sneaking little spy that's been snooping around watching me!"

"I am not! I have n't spied on you for a minute!"

"No?" Gloria's voice was insultingly skeptical. "Then how did you learn?"

"Through that!" And Sue held out the letter Jennie had given her.

"Don't, Sue — don't!" gasped Jennie in dismay.

But she was too late. The scene was moving too swiftly for her to halt it. In fact, Sue did not even hear her frantic cry.

"That's your handwriting, is n't it?" Sue demanded.

"Looks like it," Gloria coolly answered.

"Then there you are!" Sue cried triumphantly.

"In this note you make this very appointment with Jackson Holt!"

Gloria seized the letter and glanced it through. "I never wrote that!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, of course not!" taunted Sue.

"Did you ever receive that letter? — did you ever see it before?" demanded Gloria, handing it to Slim.

Jennie, very dazed, was palpitant with fear of what this unexpected twist in the affair might be leading to. Slim glanced at the letter, then handed it back.

"No, I never saw it before."

None of the three Harrisons spoke. They had believed Gloria had lied, and they now believed that Slim was lying to support her.

"That's nothing but a forgery, Sue Harrison," declared Gloria; "a bit of cheap work on your part!"

"It's not a forgery, and I did n't do it!" cried the wrathful Sue.

"No! Then where did you get it?"

"Sue!" besought Jennie in a very sick whisper.

But Sue was utterly in the control of her wrathful disbelief. "Jennie Miller saw it slipped to some man," Sue rushed on. "She suspected something wrong, and when a little later she danced with the man she managed to get the note out of his pocket. Not twenty minutes ago she brought the note to me — she did n't know what to do with it. She did n't tell me who the man was, and we did n't know who he was till Kenneth turned on the lights. There you are — that's how I got the letter!"

Gloria wheeled about on Jennie. "So — here's where Jennie Miller comes into the picture!" she blazed at her.

But Jennie, for that instant, was not even conscious of Gloria's existence. Her eyes were fastened in feverish

fear and suspense upon Slim Jackson. She knew it was Slim's nature to strike back. Tensely she awaited his denunciation: her parentage — the low places where she had lived and whence she had come — her arrest, her being even now a fugitive with bond forfeited. She was prepared to have the amazed Harrisons turn upon her; she was prepared to be ordered out of the house even as Slim and Gloria — and particularly did she feel in anticipation the amazement, the coldness, that would come into Kenneth's face.

Slim's eyes were steadily upon her; she could not loosen her gaze from his. Minutes went by, so it seemed to her, though in reality hardly any time at all had passed — and Slim said nothing at all.

That bewildered her yet more. Why did Slim not denounce her?

Dimly she heard Gloria speak to him. "This letter was never in your possession, was it?"

"It was not," he replied.

"Denial is of no use," spoke up Mrs. Harrison in the crisp, cold voice of finality. "The fact that we found you here proves the letter's authenticity. Anyhow, the only point of importance is our finding you here. There is no more to be said. We wish you both good-bye."

Slim, bowing slightly, started out first. Jennie had shrunk back a couple of yards behind the Harrisons, and was last in the line — in fact she was altogether through the doorway and in the big living-room. As Slim drew near her, she was sure the expected would happen; but Slim merely gave her a separate bow and passed on.

She could not understand!

The next instant Gloria was coming through. She halted squarely before Jennie, and glared at her.

"You were behind all this, Jennie Miller," she breathed furiously. "It may be a long time coming, but I'll get even — you wait and see!"

Jennie felt no fear because of Gloria, and since the Harrisons were following close, her answer was quiet and without acrimony. "Very well, Gloria — I'll wait."

Gloria swept by and up the stairway. Kenneth, his face pale and set, passed Jennie without a word and disappeared. But her heart leaped. Kenneth was saved.

Mrs. Harrison slipped her arms around Jennie and drew her down upon a couch, and Sue, on Jennie's other side, also put a tight arm about her.

"Jennie, we simply cannot thank you too much!" breathed Mrs. Harrison in a quavering voice, tears upon her cheeks. "You've saved us all from a terrible calamity — and especially have you saved Kenneth from a ruined life. The only way Kenneth could have been made to believe what we all suspected was by having the thing shown before his own eyes — and to you is the entire credit for his being shown. My dear, I liked you before — but now I feel that I owe you everything! Everything!"

There were more of such warm words from the soul, both from Mrs. Harrison and from Sue. For the time Jennie forgot the strangeness of Slim's behavior, and Gloria simply did not exist. She was thrilled with triumph — triumph that swelled within her and swept her dizzily aloft. She had won — and won in every detail! And behind her exultant triumph was the subconscious knowledge that whatever her means, and however much triumph might benefit her personally, she had triumphed in a righteous cause.

She was still exalted when she entered her room. She



switched on her light and made for her bed. Then she suddenly stopped short, for pinned to her pillow was a folded piece of paper.

Her exultation was suddenly stilled, and wondering she unfastened the paper and unfolded it. It was a sheet of the heavy Silver Bluffs note-paper, and on it was written in pencil:

I'll be waiting for you on the drive just inside the entrance to the grounds. Come as soon as it's safe.

P.S. This is no forgery.

There was no signature, but she instantly knew the handwriting to be Slim Jackson's. What could Slim want? And again came the question which had puzzled her a little while before: Why had Slim not denounced her when she had exposed him?

But as she stood looking at the penciled lines and wondering, a relationship dawned upon her that she had never before realized: When Slim Jackson called, she had to come.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A MEETING IN THE NIGHT

**W**HAT could Slim want with her out there upon the drive? Undoubtedly to wreak upon her, in the dark, alone, the retaliation which he had so strangely withheld a few minutes since in the library. And what form would Slim's retaliation take? — Slim the graceful, the polished, the cynical, and (as she now shiveringly remembered) the swiftly relentless?

But whatever unguessable thing he might do to her, Jennie knew she dared not disobey that summons. She dressed, and making sure that the house was again quiet, she slipped downstairs and out upon the drive. The sky had clouded over; the night had grown so dark that it was like a black bandage upon the eyes. She would have been lost had she not known the grounds. She crossed to the grassy border of the drive, and beneath the great elms which she could not see, but which she knew arched interlacingly above her, she crept silently toward the place Slim had appointed.

She had reached it and had stood there several moments, striving to mute her breath, before she disinterred from the general gloom the faint outlines of a long, low object. Slim's car she judged it to be. As she started toward it, her feet scraping upon the blue-stone of the drive, a hushed voice spoke out.

"Jennie?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Come to the front of the car. I'm alone, in the driver's seat. There you are. Now, give me your hand."

Jennie regarded with fear the dim shoulders and head.  
“What for?”

“Give me your hand.”

The voice was pleasant, velvety. But Slim's tone, no more than his smile, was never an indication of his purpose. Yet she dared not refuse.

His hand closed upon hers and he drew her to the running-board of the car. “I simply could n't go away, Jennie,” said the pleasant voice, “without congratulating you on the clever game you put across.”

She was afraid of him, but she could not stand the suspense. “Come to the point, Slim,” she said sharply. “What are you going to do to me? To congratulate me was not what you got me out here for.”

“Perhaps not.” There came a soft laugh. “Let's put it another way, then: let's say I could n't leave until we had congratulated each other on the clever game we both put across.”

“*We both put across?*” she exclaimed.

“Of course. You're smart, Jennie, but you surely don't think you could put anything of that sort over on me — unless I really wanted you to.”

“Why — why —” She was too taken aback to speak.

He laughed at her dumbfoundment; though low, it was a laugh of very real and exultant amusement.

“You don't quite get it, do you, Jen — and you don't believe me. Well, for a starter, just listen to this. When I went out on the lawn with Gloria this evening I was certain you would follow. And when I pulled that flash and turned it on the bushes, it was to make certain that you were among those present and had an orchestra chair, where you would n't miss a line of the dialogue. Of course I told Gloria there was nobody.” He chuckled

with self-delight. "But stooped low behind a bush I had seen Miss Jennie Miller Malone, holding a pair of silver slippers."

"Slim Jackson!" she breathed.

"Now, was I sitting in the game all the while, with a big stack of chips, or was n't I?" he demanded with his chuckle.

Everything was whirling to her; she had as yet but a faint glimmering of what must have been the truth.

"If you knew — if you were in it — why did n't you tell me when I first spoke to you about Gloria?"

Again came his soft chuckle of self-delight. "I thought of that, Jennie. But I decided I could n't trust you. I was afraid you might have got some new-fangled notion that would make you balk at the idea that came to me. I saw that the only sure way to get you to act and to put the thing across was to make you think you were discovering something and that it was all on the level — never to let you suspect, until the thing was done, that it was all a little frame-up."

"A frame-up?" breathed Jennie.

"It was, and it was n't," answered Slim's amused voice. "I'd done that sort of thing with Gloria before. I just did it again, for your especial benefit, making sure that you would be suspicious and would watch—and being dead sure just how you would act. And it worked almost exactly as I figured!"

"And Gloria — did she know it was a frame-up?"

"No. It was all just as real to her as it was to you."

"But — but why did you do it?"

He pressed the hand he still held. "For your sake, my child. I saw that what you said was true: that if you could break off matters between Gloria and Ken-

neth, it would be a big boost for you with Mrs. Harrison. And I wanted you to have that big boost. Honest!"

"And was that your only reason?" she demanded sharply.

"Is n't that enough for little old Slim Jackson? The higher an old friend goes, the better it is for me — is n't that so?" He laughed once more. "Oh, I'm not going to lie to you, Jennie. I had other reasons, but I'm not going to tell you — not now. Same as with to-night's little affair, I think it's wisest not to tell you what's doing until after it's done. Yes, I had other reasons — big reasons — and you'll know when the time comes."

She was still bewildered. "But Kenneth thinks you have betrayed him. You have thrown away his friendship."

"Kenneth feels sore at me now. But a little later he'll care less for Gloria and will be glad he escaped her — and it'll get to him that I did what I did with the chief idea of saving him — and he'll like me better than ever. You just watch — that's the way it's going to work out!"

"And Gloria?"

"We need n't waste any good worry on Gloria. To-night'll never be talked about, and it'll not hurt her any. That girl simply can't help making men make love to her — and that same goes for a lot of these young society dames. They don't care a lot for any one man — but each one wants a bunch of men making love to her. They like it — it flatters 'em — they're man-crazy — and each man's a sort of souvenir. I guess I ought to know! . . . As for Gloria, to-night'll not hurt me a bit with her. She just thinks we were both caught together. Gloria and I'll be just as good friends as ever."



Jennie was so dazed with this sudden behind-the-scenes view of what she had considered to be wholly her own righteous plan, so bewildered with Slim's jocular and cynical self-appreciation, that she stood there beside the car utterly without words.

"And I say, Jen," the light voice went on, "that letter was a swell forgery. You certainly are still all right with the pen! That little knack will come in useful some day — you see!" He laughed softly once more. "That's all I wanted to see you about, Jen — I just wanted you to know that I was sitting in this game with you. And, Jennie — remember my saying four years ago down at the Pekin, that we were going to put a lot of things across together — you and I? As yet you don't see how big this stunt to-night really is, and is going to be. And to-night's stunt is only the beginning for us two, Jennie — only a bare starter! Good-luck, Jen — and good-bye!"

Almost noiselessly his low car moved forward into the engulfing blackness. She stood motionless for a space, his chuckle of cynical delight and self-satisfaction still sounding in her ears. Then she crept back into the house and into her bed. All the exulting triumph which had swelled within her only a brief half-hour before, when Mrs. Harrison had taken her so warmly into her arms and had so praised her with words from a spontaneous heart — that was all gone. The glory had departed from her achievement; and huddled in her bed, she felt humiliated, and very small, and very sick. . . .

Also, that night, for the first time in her life, she felt afraid of Slim Jackson.

When she came down the next morning Gloria had already departed, and no mention was made of her

name. Kenneth had also gone; and when Mr. Harrison came home that evening, he brought word that Kenneth had left for the West, to be gone an indefinite time. The explanation made at the table was that his purpose was to examine some mining properties in which Harrison and Company thought of acquiring an interest; but every one knew that Kenneth had gone for quite another reason.

Mrs. Harrison's gratitude and her frank affection, spoken most warmly that morning and thereafter expressed in some way every time they met, Jennie inwardly shrank from — as she also did from the spontaneous outbursts of Sue. A sense of guilt rested heavily upon her; she felt that she deserved none of this. Somehow Slim seemed, as if by those adroit hands of his, to have snatched away all the genuineness, the sincerity, that had been in the act which they were ever declaring had saved them all from misfortune. And yet Jennie dared refuse or avoid none of their gratitude and none of their affection. To have refused would have created surprise, would have required explanation — and explanation might lead somehow to exposure. There was nothing for it but to accept the situation.

And after all, there was this much that Slim could not take away from her: she had acted in the full belief that the two o'clock tryst in the library between Slim and Gloria had been *bona fide* on both sides — and if she had not originated this plan and carried it out, the Harrisons and Kenneth would not now be free of an unfortunate relationship. So much was real and unsubtractable — and therefore, since everything had grown out of this, was this not in consequence almost everything? . . .

She thought frequently of Kenneth. Was he, out there in the solitude of the West where he had gone to conceal his hurt, recovering from his heart-break and disillusionment? She hoped so, for he was deserving of a far finer girl than Gloria — of the very finest girl! She wondered what was happening to him, and within him, away out there, all alone. . . .

As the June days passed, her humiliation lost its first keen edge, and she accepted matters as they were with a growing composure. The days were much alike, given over to bathing, going to teas, motoring about, or merely quiet chats with Mrs. Harrison; and of evenings there was frequent dancing in neighboring houses. With this pleasant summer routine she developed rapidly.

Her unchanging appearance of modesty made Mrs. Harrison believe her unspoilable, so the generous elder woman never withheld her praise. One afternoon when Jennie had been at Silver Bluffs over a month, and she and Mrs. Harrison were standing upon the piazza gazing out at the blazing Sound, Mrs. Harrison impulsively crossed to Jennie and kissed her.

"What's the matter?" asked Jennie.

"I could n't help it — I just got to looking at you."

"Looking at me?"

"Yes. And I was saying to myself," the low-pitched voice went on, "'She was beautiful when she first came to us, but she is growing more beautiful every day!' And that is true, my dear."

Jennie grew warm with an uprush of exultant happiness. This was a wonderful world she had come into — a wonderful world indeed! And, just then, her nearing place in this world seemed as glorious as the sunset that

was besparkling the waters — only for her the glory was the glory of sunrise, and the dazzling brilliance of full day was yet to come.

But even while they stood there, Jennie's other world reached out to her a beckoning hand.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

THE beckoning hand took the form of a telegram carried out to her by a maid. The message bore the signature of the lawyers who managed her affairs, and its ten words, to any other eyes than Jennie's, would have meant nothing more than that her lawyers required her presence that evening upon a matter of immediate business. But the telegram was a code, prearranged for use in case of extreme necessity. To Jennie the routine telegram meant that Uncle George wished to see her without delay.

She showed the message to Mrs. Harrison, and two hours later she was in the sitting-room of a suite in that great hotel-city, the Biltmore, in whose multitudinous bustle persons could come and go unnoticed, and she was shaking the hand of Uncle George.

"You sure are looking great, Jennie!" exclaimed the old man. "You sure are looking the real goods — better even than I ever thought you would!"

Despite his words of admiration and approval, there was a soberness in his wrinkled face that would have excited Jennie's alarm even had the telegram not already done so.

"What's the matter, Uncle George?" she demanded.

"It's bad news, my dear" — patting her hand — "but take it easy. It's what happens to us all, and I guess some day it'll be my turn."

"Is it — something — about dad?" she breathed.



He shook his head. "It's about your Aunt Mary. She died last night."

"Aunt Mary — dead!" Jennie stood dazed; never before had death touched her closely.

"Her funeral's to-morrow morning at eleven. Black Jerry asked me to see you and tell you. He was afraid you might learn of it some other way, and he was afraid you might be impulsive and forget everything else and come rushing down to the funeral where there may be a bunch of people. That's why Jerry asked me to see you; that's what Jerry gave strict orders about — you are not to come to the funeral."

"Aunt Mary — dead!" she repeated.

"You'll do like Jerry said and not come to the funeral?" the old man insisted.

"I'll not come — if dad says so," she returned.

But back at Silver Bluffs she kept to herself, and most of that night she lay awake. Her mind went back and went over and over all the acts of unselfish kindness, of constant thoughtfulness, of her patient Aunt Mary who had mothered her through nigh a dozen years — and she could see the white, worn face, the frail figure, now lying rigid in eternal silence in the little sitting-room above the Pekin. She recalled her own impatience, her selfishness, the advantage she so often had taken of her none-too-clever aunt. Hot tears trickled down her cheeks; her soul throbbed with a quivering pain that was a sense of loss, of yearning, that was the call of blood to blood. And so it was during most of the night.

The next morning she had made a decision. She was going to slip back for a glimpse of her own people. She had to! — no matter what happened. And her plan for securing this glimpse was based upon her remem-

brance that, however largely attended a funeral in her neighborhood might be, usually only a single carriage followed the hearse on the far and expensive journey to the outskirts of Brooklyn where are colonized the city's dead.

She dressed herself in a dark, unpretentious suit, and told Mrs. Harrison that she was obliged to go into New York for a further conference with her lawyers. At half-past ten, in a big department store, she was buying the thickest mourning veil, and a few minutes later, the veil on and lowered, at another doorway from the one at which she had entered, she chartered a taxi and stepped in. The car stopped as ordered a block away from, but in full sight of, the Pekin; and the curtains drawn, Jennie sat peering at the front of her old home. Her heart beat wildly; she was back once more among her old folk, in her old country. It all seemed so close to her — yet so far, far away!

Jennie had calculated time and procedure almost exactly. Her taxi had been waiting at the curb only a few minutes when she saw solemn, straggling little groups come out of the doorway — and then she saw the coffin borne out and placed in the motor-hearse — and then she saw her father come out and, refusing the company of Uncle George, enter a solitary taxicab. Pursuant to her directions her own car followed this cortège of a hearse and a single carriage at a block's distance — uptown through East Side streets — across the highswung Queensborough Bridge — and then at thirty miles an hour (for New York motor-hearses must earn their keep and so have no time to waste) over Long Island macadam. Arrived at the graveyard and the open grave, the motor-hearse quickly discharged its

black freight and then sped away on its next errand of expressage.

Jennie, glancing about, saw a score or more of little groups scattered among the slabs of marble. She had the sense that here the burying of the dead was just a great business — so many funerals to be disposed of per hour; that the graveyard was just a great freightage receiving-office, where human beings were trans-shipped from the present to whatever points might lie beyond.

With so much routine business going on, only the day's-work attention was given to this last scene in the mortal drama of Mary Graham, spinster. As soon as Jennie was certain that no one was beside her aunt's grave except a swiftly working stage crew and her father, she slipped from her taxi to the edge of the grave. She saw her father glance at her, and she was quite certain he recognized her despite the disguise of the heavy veil. But he gave no sign, and turned back to the grave. Thus, silent, side by side, they stood watching the moist, yellow clay pour from deft shovels down upon the dead: Black Jerry, his derby pulled down tightly, his square face set and emotionless — and Jennie, behind her veil, crying all the while: and thus they remained, apart, unspeaking, until the workmen had slapped the earth into a shapely mound, and had swung along to their next task.

Black Jerry turned abruptly away toward his taxicab. Silently Jennie slipped a hand through his arm, and walked beside him. Even then he gave no sign of recognizing her presence. Arrived at her taxi, she whispered, "You're coming with me." He hesitated, then, settling with the chauffeur of his own taxi, he stepped into Jennie's car. Her fingers clutched his big hand

tightly and she drew up her heavy veil; but despite the privacy he sat gazing straight ahead, his heavy jaw clenched, his eyes hardly winking. Jennie was suddenly bereft of the power to open conversation; the old habit of childhood returned to her, not to speak to her reticent father until he had first spoken.

It seemed to Jennie that they had gone miles before he looked at her. And then his voice was abrupt and gruff.

"You should n't have come here, Jennie. You should n't have took such a risk."

"There was n't any risk; nobody could have told who I was, and besides, there was n't anybody to see me," she argued. "And, dad . . . Aunt Mary is . . . I had to come!" Her voice was quavering now. "And, dad — I — I wanted to see you!"

"You should n't have took such a risk," repeated the gruff voice.

"But, dad — it came over me that now you are left all alone — except me — and I —"

"Don't you think about me — I'm all right." He paused. "If there's no one left but you, that just means that there's only you for me to think about. And I guess that'll be plenty."

Something approaching awe had come into the grim, swarthy face as his gaze had taken her in. He was gloatingly proud; and yet he was half afraid of this new being who was his daughter. His voice was stiff with embarrassment.

"I guess I don't need to tell you that you are looking just about as fine as they come! And I seen Harry Edwards and Slim Jackson lately; they both tell me you are landing bigger every day. I wanted you to have a

chance — and you're sure making good on it. You just keep that up, that's all I ask for."

As abruptly as he had turned to her, he now turned away, and his set face stared straight ahead. Again Jennie felt descend upon her her childhood's inhibiting habit of speechlessness with her father — and again father and daughter rode on in silence, though she still clutched his hand. At the Manhattan end of the bridge, where the jam of vehicles brought the pace of each down to a bare crawl, and the sidewalks were crowded with bustling people, Black Jerry half opened the door of the moving car, and turned to her again. Once more his face worked with its strange mixture of hunger and gloating pride.

"Don't you take no more risks. You're going great — just keep it up. You won't be seeing me, but somehow I'll learn what's doing — and you just remember, even if I ain't around, that I'll be backing you up in every play."

He was out of the car and had closed the door before she could so much as say "good-bye"; and the drawn curtain did not even permit her to see the deft manner in which he transferred himself unnoticed from the car to the milling crowd upon the sidewalk.

After a few minutes she recalled the problem of her necessary transformation. Ten minutes later, her taxi paid off, she stepped through one entrance of a big and busy department store, a figure in deep mourning; and a few minutes afterwards she emerged from another entrance, her face a bit pale and sober, perhaps, but otherwise a pretty young girl seemingly out on a midsummer shopping expedition. By the middle of the afternoon she was back at Silver Bluffs.



Joy — grief — joy again: youth is so elastic of spirit that it can pass from one extreme to the other of its emotional compass almost as easily and rapidly as a trained singer passes from high note to low note and then sweeps thrillingly again into the upper range. The swiftness of the emotional phases through which Jennie was yet to pass that day, though later she privately rebuked herself for instability, was but proof of her youth's great resilience.

While she was changing into a light summer frock, a maid brought her word that Sue was waiting for her on the pier. But when she came out upon the great stone dock, no Sue was in sight. She decided that Sue must be out on the landing platform of solid masonry to which a stone stairway descended, and she strolled out to the end of the pier. Sure enough down on the platform there was Sue. And also there was another figure — Kenneth.

Of a sudden Jennie's heart began to go madly. Sue saw her at once and called to her to come down. Kenneth turned, and she saw that the drawn face which she had last beheld in that after-midnight scene in the library, over a month before, was now brown and agleam with vitality. Kenneth also called to her, and with steps that she strove to make steady she descended.

"Why — why — I did n't even know you were coming home!" she exclaimed as she took the hand Kenneth reached up to her.

"Neither did I!" he laughed. "Not till four days ago."

"Then Sue must have known for four days you were coming. Why did n't you tell me, Sue?"

There was no answer from Sue. Surprised at this, Jennie looked about. Sue was already up the stairway; in an instant she had vanished over the top of the pier.

And then life for Jennie moved with bewildering swiftness.

Kenneth laid his other hand on the hand he was holding. "Jennie, look me straight in the eyes," he commanded in a low voice. She obeyed. "Here's what I came home for: I came home to ask you whether, when you were so nice to me a month or so ago, you were just flirting, or whether you really cared?"

The suddenness, the complete unexpectedness, of it all utterly swept away her power of speech. She could only gaze at him. She could not even think. But her eyes perceived how eager was his handsome face, she was conscious what a graceful figure he made in his white flannels. . . . There was a long moment of silence down there on that platform, shut off from all but the sea, with the water rhythmically plashing over the edge — a long moment, while they gazed eye into eye.

"Because," he said at length, "out there, all alone, I could n't help remembering how nice you had been to me. And whether you care or not — I care!"

She had enough of woman's instinctive evasiveness to reply: "But I thought that Gloria was —"

"There are two things I awoke to while out there in the West," he interrupted. "One was that I really never cared for Gloria. The other was that I really cared for you. And I've come home to tell you how much I love you — and to ask whether you care a little — and to ask if you will marry me."

She had known him in his earlier attitude toward her, as half in earnest, as amusedly superior, but there was no doubting his full earnestness at this moment. She did not at once reply. She had not analyzed her feelings for him before this; and within her was too great a

whirl for her to analyze them now. She did not know whether she really loved him; but she had been, and was now more than ever, fascinated by his personal charm — to which was added, in her subconscious mind, the attraction of his manner of perfect ease in the great world, the knowledge of his worldly success. It came to her in this swift moment that though she had planned and worked to get on, she had not planned for just this achievement; and it also came to her, should her answer be yes, it would open the doors to the fulfillment of all her ambitions and the ambitions that others had dreamed for her.

“Jennie — do you care?” he huskily insisted.

Her eyes, very bright, met his; her voice was a breathless, bewildered whisper.

“I think I care for you — more than for any other —”

He did not let her finish. “Jennie,” he cried, and took her in his arms. Thrilled, gasping, she gave herself to his embrace, and her head sank upon his shoulder — and she rested there, quivering, a chaos of amazement, of half-frightened ecstatic happiness. . . .

But presently, even in these supreme moments while she first rested upon the shoulder of her wonderful lover, her divided soul, her habit of looking back into the world she had left, asserted itself. Her mind flashed to two hours before and she saw her father as he made his sudden exit from her taxicab, his grim, unhandsome face working with hunger and gloating pride; and again she heard his gruff unsteady whisper, “Remember — I’ll be backing you up in every play!”

When he learned about this, what would her father think?

## CHAPTER XX

### BLACK JERRY INSURES JENNIE'S HAPPINESS

**A**N hour later, when Jennie and Kenneth mounted from the wave-washed landing of stone where life for Jennie had taken such a gaspingly swift upward flight, it had been decided that Kenneth's family was at once to be told of the engagement. To Jennie's bewilderment over the event itself was added the suspense of how the family would take it. She was suddenly and acutely conscious that in the matter of her social desirability she was far, far less than they believed her — and they believed her to be just a likable girl, an orphan, without fortune and without position.

But before Kenneth was half through his first sentence, Mrs. Harrison had grasped what had happened, and Jennie's suspense instantly was gone. Mrs. Harrison took Jennie into her arms, her kindly eyes flushed with sudden tears.

"It's just what I've been wishing for this long, long time!" she cried. "I'm so happy, my dear — so happy!"

And Sue — Sue found such part of the English language as twenty years and Braithewood Hall had placed at her command totally inadequate for her delight. Her happiness could only express itself in ejaculations, hugs, perfervid kisses. And when, a little later, Mr. Harrison returned upon the *Myra*, he accepted Jennie with all the heartiness she could have expected of him. It seemed that the whole family was a harmonious unit of pleasure over Jennie's prospective entrance into the family.

But after dinner, up in Mrs. Harrison's sitting-room, where Mr. Harrison had asked to see her, Mr. Harrison began without preface.

"Kate, I've got to say I'm not exactly pleased with this engagement."

"Why not?" inquired his wife. "Don't you like Jennie?"

"I like her, yes — I like her very much as a person. But beyond what she may be in herself, she does not represent anything, and she won't bring anything to Kenneth."

Mrs. Harrison spoke rather sadly. "There you go — being very worldly again."

"One's got to be worldly, Kate," he replied doggedly, "to hold one's place in the world — or to win a higher place!"

"But why need one bother about one's place in the world?"

"I know you need not — you were born at the top, and so it's all a matter of course to you. But I was not; and I pulled you down, out of the circle of your friends. Of course we've gone up a lot since then, but I've got enough of a man's pride in me to want to place my family on what was your level before we married — and a higher level if I can!"

"I am satisfied, James."

"But I am not! I don't object to Jennie as an individual. With all his popularity almost any girl would have said yes to Kenneth. There are plenty of other girls just as pretty and nice as Jennie is — and one of these would have had money and position, which would have helped Kenneth up a lot. And while I'm about it," he went on doggedly, "I might as well say some-



thing else: I've been quiet about it because I thought something just as good might develop for Kenneth. Kate, I think that that Gloria Raymond affair was taken altogether too seriously. I admit Gloria is headstrong, and I admit what she did was n't particularly admirable. But she could have settled down, and her money and position would at once have put Kenneth at the front of New York's foremost young men of affairs — and with such a start where could n't Kenneth finish!"

Mrs. Harrison replied with a decision one might not have expected in a character where graciousness seemed the chief element. "Money and position are n't everything! And particularly in Kenneth's case, they're not what he needs most. Jennie has brains, and character, and strength — and these things she can give will in the end be of greatest help. We might as well be frank with ourselves about Kenneth: with all his abilities, he has his strain of weakness. The real force and character in Jennie may be what, if she gets time and a real chance, is necessary to make Kenneth into a big, substantial, human man. And to have my son a real man — that to me must always be the dominant concern about Kenneth."

Mr. Harrison shrugged his shoulders. "Well, there's not much use in discussing which is the better way, since the matter is settled." He moved about restlessly for a moment, then turned back upon his wife. "All the same," he said abruptly, "it might have been better for Kenneth, and for all of us, if the girl in the case had position and money."

She replied to the look in his eyes rather than to his words. "What's the matter, James? Business worries?"

"Yes. And the right sort of connections might help

us out of those worries. The business relationship with Mr. Conway may not prove as profitable — or agreeable — as in the past.”

“Why not?”

“He faces trouble, and if it comes to pass we’re certain to suffer. Back of it all is a political feud between Mr. Conway and a man named Murdock, and it does n’t look promising for Mr. Conway. It’s partly politics — a fight for district leadership. You would n’t understand it; I don’t understand it myself.”

Mr. Harrison did not add that as a careful business man, who wished to keep all his connections respectable, or remain ignorant of such as were not, he had avoided trying to understand it; and he did not add that since the Sunday several weeks back when Conway had called upon him, he had used all the influence he could exert through his most powerful social and financial connections upon Murdock, and Murdock had seemed still recalcitrant and determined. He was filled with forebodings — not on account of what might happen to Conway — but on account of what Conway had so clearly and truly stated might happen to the business of Harrison and Company.

While Mr. and Mrs. Harrison discussed and considered, Jennie, having excused herself and gone up to her room, also considered. Her dominant feeling toward Kenneth was still bewildered fascination; toward herself personally her feeling was that she was going up, up — breathlessly, magically up! And she would help Kenneth make a great place in the world — a very great place! She felt swelling within herself the power to do this.

And then she thought again of her father — her mind lingered upon him. What, indeed, would he say when he

learned? In her exalted spirits, a great idea was suddenly born. There was one thing she might do, after she had become Kenneth's wife and had come to be the person of power which she intended to be: she would use her influence, indirectly of course, to have removed from her father that stigma of double murder which he had borne for fifteen years. Yes — she would do it! . . .

She decided that she should at once tell her father of her engagement. Late at night, in a disguised hand, she wrote an unsigned note to him, which she sealed and enclosed in a letter to Uncle George, a letter which would mean nothing if it fell into the possession of the wrong person, but which Uncle George would understand. Then she slipped out of the house unobserved, and out of the grounds, and dropped the letter into a village post-box.

The letter was not taken up until the next morning, and Uncle George did not receive it until the next evening when he came back to dress for dinner to his apartment on Central Park West: Uncle George, though he liked the easy life of the restaurants and hotels of Broadway, preferred for his hours of rest and relaxation a roomy, quiet place such as he had, managed by a suavely efficient Japanese servant. Uncle George could not break his dinner appointment, but at nine o'clock he passed through the Pekin, whose two-piece orchestra had just begun its evening's work, and with Black Jerry entered the little office at the rear. When the two men were seated at the little table he handed Black Jerry the enclosure.

Black Jerry read the note, then he lit a match and burned it. When he looked up, his black eyes were gleaming.

"Am I to be let in on what it's all about?" demanded Uncle George. "Of course I know it's news from Jennie."

Black Jerry told him. There was a brief silence, the two men gazing steadily at each other.

"Did n't I say my Jennie had as much right to a chance as any other man's kid!" Black Jerry presently exclaimed exultantly. "Did n't I say I'd give my kid a chance! And ain't I! And did n't I say she was clever enough to make good in any chance I give her! And ain't she made good!"

"She sure has, Jerry!" returned Uncle George, jubilant yet solemn. "Well, we have put the big thing across! I said it had to be a slow plan — but, Jerry, we have put it across!"

Jerry ordered in a split of champagne, and these two shapers of life silently drank to their own success and to Jennie.

"She's already won big," said Uncle George, with eyes meditatively peering into the future. "And yet she's only just beginning! I wonder how far she's going to go."

"She's clever, my Jennie is," was Black Jerry's proud response.

"Yes, she's clever," Uncle George nodded. "God only knows how far she'll go!"

Once more there was silence. Then Uncle George spoke on in his solemn tone:

"We've put the big thing over, Jerry. Our job is done — we're through. And this means, Jerry, that more than ever you've got to keep out of her life. If it was n't ended before between you and her, it's ended now."

"Sure, I understood that. But if she ever needs me —"

"Of course you and me'll stand behind her, ready to back her up. We'll keep our eyes open, but we've got to stick behind the scenes, Jerry — you bet we've got to stick behind the scenes — for if we ever made any slip and those swells got wise to Jennie, there'd sure be one God-awful crash!"

Jerry nodded. His dark face was fixed meditatively on the old man for a space; then he asked:

"What kind of a guy is this fellow Jennie's going to marry?"

"He's one of the young swells I don't know such a lot about, though we're friends when we meet. He's around town a lot, and he likes his good time — same as the other young fellows of his sort."

"Girls?"

"Can't say, Jerry. In that line he's either damned good or damned cautious. The worst thing I really know about him is that he's tied up with Slim Jackson in a show or two."

"That does n't listen very good to me, his mixing in with Slim Jackson. D' you think he'll treat her square, Uncle George?"

"Why not, Jerry? What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing."

But Black Jerry was thinking of something, and long after Uncle George had gone, and all the next day, that thought kept rising and mixing with his pride and exultation in Jennie's rise, and mixing in with his fierce affection for her. In consequence, he that evening hired a touring car, and goggled as he had been on the day of Jennie's graduation, he rode out toward Silver Bluffs.



At ten o'clock he left the car on the roadside a quarter of a mile away from Silver Bluffs and crept inside the grounds. He had had training neither as burglar nor as spy, but he would have made a fair success at the precarious trade of either. Hid among the shrubbery he watched the house, studying, listening to such talk as he could overhear; and he slipped about the grounds getting the location of the outbuildings, and the lay of the land, and particularly noting the *Myra* which lay at anchor in the little harbor.

The three following nights he did the same. On the fourth night, at about half-past ten, he broke the lock of the boathouse and, subduing his voice, he telephoned up to the big house asking that Mr. Kenneth be told that the captain of the *Myra* wished that certain orders left for the morrow be made more clear, and that the captain would be awaiting him upon the pier.

There was a turn in the path that led down from the house, and at this turn there was a clump of thick shrubbery. Behind this Jerry stationed himself. Presently he heard footsteps, and after a few moments a solitary figure came around the turn. In the darkness he could only see that the figure was a man. He stepped forward and saluted sailor-fashion.

"Mr. Kenneth Harrison, sir?" he inquired.

"Yes," confirmed the other. "But where's Captain Graham?"

Jerry stepped closer. "That message about the captain was just a fake to get you out here."

"Then this is a hold-up!" cried Kenneth, and instantly his fist shot out at his dim opponent.

But Jerry had been on the alert; and he had eyes to which night was almost the same as day. Even as Ken-

neth struck, both his wrists were seized; and country club athlete though he was, he was helpless in those twin grips.

"Listen," said Black Jerry. "I ain't going to hurt you. I just want to talk to you."

"What about?"

"The girl you're going to marry — Jennie Miller."

"Jennie Miller!" exclaimed Kenneth. "Who are you?"

Black Jerry had given much thought to this point. "I'm a sort of cousin — pretty distant — have n't seen Jennie since she came East — I'll never figure for anything in her life. Jennie writes to her people out West about her engagement; no close relatives, but some people who think a lot of Jennie — we all do that, though we're nobody compared to her. So they wires me to look over what sort of a fellow this Harrison is. You get me?"

"Yes." Kenneth had begun to recover his composure. "And what sort of fellow do you think this Harrison is?"

"I don't know. And since I don't know, here's what I got to say to you." Jerry's naturally heavy voice, subdued though it was, was vibrant with menace. "Some people say I'm a tough guy, and mebbe I am. I'm going to be watching you all the while — but I'll never bother you and you'll never see me if you treat Jennie right. But if you don't treat her square" — Jerry was now holding the two wrists in his big left hand, and his right hand had slipped up and closed softly about the other's throat — "if you don't treat Jennie square, I'll wring your damned neck off. So I guess you'd better treat her square. Remember I'll be watching. That's all I want to say."

He drew quickly back into the shrubbery and slipped

through the heavy shadows, out of the grounds. To Jerry's mind his action had been a wise precaution. When there was the slightest doubt about a man, stiffen him up in advance by throwing into him the fear of God or the devil: that was plain common sense as Life had taught it to Jerry Malone. What he had just done was the only further thing he could do which would guarantee the safety and happiness of Jennie's future.

Within the house, somewhat shaken, Kenneth told Jennie of his experience. "He had a deep growl of a voice, and though I'm no weakling he could have twisted my arm right off if he had wanted to. He said he was a sort of relative of yours — a cousin. Who was he, Jennie?"

Jennie knew well enough who the man was. So her father had gone to such an extreme for her sake! But though dictated by love, she saw his action for that moment as ill-considered, as a terrible risk. She had a feeling that Kenneth was eyeing her suspiciously. For an instant she trembled inwardly lest the whole truth should come out right then and there.

But she controlled herself and spoke steadily enough. "Yes, I suppose the man is a sort of relative." She forced a smile. "As I've always told you, I'm very much of a nobody. And my people out West, or such as are left, are pretty rough — and direct."

Kenneth smiled — though wryly — and she knew that her danger was over, if indeed there had been any. "Your cousin was direct, all right! Even if I did n't want to treat you square, as he put it, just because I love you, I'd certainly do it after having had those hands about my throat. But, Jennie, do you mind calling the cousin off? I never did like big dogs."

"I will — if I can reach him," promised Jennie.

"Since mother sent out the announcement of our engagement this afternoon," Kenneth went on, "it'll probably be in to-morrow morning's papers — and reading it in black and white may reassure and quiet him a bit."

"Yes, I think it will," Jennie agreed.

## CHAPTER XXI

### HARRY EDWARDS LEARNS THE NEWS

NOT very far from the Pekin, and not far from the Criminal Courts Building, and not far from the City Hall where the formalities relative to such items as public contracts are conducted, there stood and still stands a grimy unpretentious brick building having upon the plate glass of its first floor the tarnished gilt sign of

### SAMUEL CONWAY

### REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE

Always there was a group of men in the big outer office — sometimes a crowd; but none came to sell or buy property, or to safeguard against loss by fire, or to place a little bet (odds fixed by the actuary's handbook) upon the great race between Life and Death. Sam Conway had long since dropped business of such a sort; his quarters had become an unofficial sub-station of the city government. Here many a matter was privately worked out and privately settled, later to be submitted in City Hall to the public approval of a perfunctory vote.

The time was ten o'clock of the morning following Black Jerry's brief scene with Kenneth Harrison; and in the inner office, alone together, sat Harry Edwards and Sam Conway himself, his bulk swelling over and under the arms of his swivel chair.

"Glad to see you, Harry," he was saying in his hearty



voice. "Everything moving along all right for you over to the office?"

"My end of things is going great — thanks to you, Sam!" exclaimed Harry.

"Thank yourself, my boy!" — with a deprecatory wave of a big hand, and a genial smile on his florid face. It was easy to see why men liked Sam Conway and would fight for him: he never belittled them. "Of course, I may be able to put you in the way of a good chance, but the rest is all up to you. If you make good, it's because *you are good*. But how does it come you're away from the office in the middle of the morning?"

"There's something Mr. Harrison wanted to know. Since he did n't want to telephone, I guess he felt it was confidential."

"Shoot, Harry," said the big man jocularly. "I got too many good friends in the Police Department for them to plant any listening machines about this shop."

"Mr. Harrison seemed worried about this Murdock mix-up. He wanted to know if there were any new developments."

Conway's face became grave. "I guess I don't need to tell you, Harry, that there's nothing to all this stuff Murdock says he can prove against me. Nothing crooked, I mean."

"Of course not!" Harry exclaimed. "You're square as they make 'em! There's nothing to Murdock but just jealousy and spite!"

"I guess you've got it sized up just about right. But thanks for feeling that way about me." He paused, eyes full on Harry, then spoke with deliberation. "All the same, Harry, you might as well know that if he can go through with all he's threatened, I'm done for —

finished — I'm a has-been. And it may even mean a stretch in the pen for me. Of course he's got some papers; I've tried to help some friends in my time, and those papers can be twisted to look mighty bad."

"They're all rot!" Harry declared loyally. "And Murdock'll never put it across!"

"No, I don't think Murdock will," the other said with quiet incisiveness.

"Shall I tell Mr. Harrison that?"

"Yes." And then, as Harry started to rise — "Wait a minute." Conway regarded the young man steadily. "How much you getting now, Harry?"

"Fifty a week."

Without remark Conway reached for the desk telephone, and after a minute he was talking with Mr. Harrison. "This is Sam Conway. I want Harry Edwards's salary raised to seventy-five a week, the raise to date back to the first of the month. He's to be put on some things I'm specially interested in — I'll tell you just what when I see you. Good-bye."

"Why, Sam —" began the astounded and gratified Harry.

"Cut out the thanks. I take care of my friends when they've proved that they are my friends and when they've proved they can do the work. You're worth the raise. You'll get your orders later. That's all there is to that. So let's forget it."

Harry's lips did not speak, but his soul was eloquent. It was wonderful, this straightforward, big-man's method Conway had of doing fair and generous things and then instantly dismissing them.

"And here's another thing you might tell Mr. Harrison," Conway went on. "I think there's a good chance

for this Murdock matter to blow over. Some friends have arranged for us to meet to-night — and we're going to have dinner together; they think if we're brought together we may patch things up."

"Mr. Harrison will be mighty glad to hear that," said Harry.

"Then to-day ought to be a good day for him," said Conway — "this coming on top of the engagement in his family."

"What engagement?"

"His son's. Did n't you see it in the papers this morning?"

"I've hardly had a chance to look at to-day's papers. I suppose it is to that Miss Raymond."

"No. That was n't the name in the paper. When I read it, I had an idea it was that dark girl we met that day out at Harrison's place. Here's the paper it was in" — taking a newspaper from his desk — "and here's the piece about it. Miller — Jennie Miller is her name. Why what's the matter, Harry?"

Harry had risen, his face suddenly white and haggard. "Give me the paper, Sam!" he exclaimed huskily, and seized the newspaper from Conway's hands. Yes, there it was in print! His feverish eyes took in the main facts: "Mrs. James Harrison announces . . . Kenneth Harrison . . . Miss Jennie Miller . . . marriage at early date . . ."

"What's the matter, Harry?" repeated Conway.

Harry swayed so that he caught hold of the desk to save himself. "It's — it's — I just suddenly feel sick, Sam. Will you get those messages over to Mr. Harrison — somehow — and — and tell him I'm sick. Good-bye."

"See here, Harry —"

But Harry was already swaying toward the door, and did not pause. Out on the sidewalk he lurched along like a man in liquor, save that his head was up and his eyes were wildly staring. For several minutes he did not know what he was doing, or where he was — his walk was wild, purposeless. His brain, his soul, was fiery, agonizing chaos. So Jennie was to be married! . . .

His throbbing chaos did not lessen, but presently out of it emerged a purpose. At eleven o'clock he entered the apartment house on Central Park West, pushed by the Japanese valet-butler who answered his ring and strode into Uncle George's bedroom, closing the door behind him. The old man, propped up in bed with many pillows, was having his morning coffee.

"I say, Harry — what's broke loose?" cried the old man, staring at the frantic figure that had stormed his bedroom.

"You know about Jennie Malone's engagement to Kenneth Harrison?"

"Why, I suppose I do, Harry." Uncle George set his cup on his breakfast tray. "But what's that got to do with this calling out of the fire department?"

"I've always loved her! — I've always expected to marry her! — and I've simply got to see her!"

Uncle George blinked his lashless eyes at this passionate outbreak. He spoke drawlingly, with purpose in his deliberation.

"All that being so, why do you burst in here like this, making me spill coffee on the handsomest pajamas in New York not owned by a woman?"

"Because I know you've got some safe way of getting quick word to Jennie. I've got to see her, and it's up to you to arrange it."

"Sorry, Harry, but you've spoiled a first-class cup of coffee and ruined some ne plus ultra pajamas all for nothing. There's not a thing I —"

"Oh, yes, you can — and you will! I don't want to do anything that'll hurt Jennie — God knows I don't! — but unless you fix matters and give me a chance to see her and argue my side of this case, I'll smash everything. I'll tell all I know! That may be a rotten thing to do — but I'm crazy over this — and I'll do it, Uncle George — I'll do it!"

Uncle George perceived that mere words, however adroit, would not avert this danger — that this grief-maddened young man would certainly act, if not properly handled. Only a few nights before, down in the Pekin, he and Black Jerry had said that their great plan had been brought to a triumphant finish, — that henceforth they were to be out of Jennie's life. But there had been a proviso that they were to come to Jennie's aid if she should need them. Well, she certainly was now in danger. And this was not a situation where Black Jerry could help; Uncle George perceived that he must play the cards for both Black Jerry and himself.

"Suppose you have a talk with Jennie, and suppose she still says no — what then?" demanded Uncle George.

"If she still says no, I'll swallow my medicine and never say a word."

"Remember, Harry, that's a promise."

Silently Uncle George reached for the telephone beside his bed and called a Long Island number. There was a long wait — it seemed interminable to Harry; then Uncle George said in precise, business-like voice, totally unlike his own:



"The office of Taylor and Johnson wishes to speak to Miss Miller, please." There was another long wait; then Uncle George's voice of a chief clerk spoke again. "Hello. . . . Is this Miss Miller? . . . This is Mr. Harper, of Taylor and Johnson. The firm finds it necessary to ask you to come in to the office some time this afternoon. . . ."

A minute passed with Uncle George listening. "Hold the wire one moment, please," requested Uncle George's clerical voice. He looked up at Harry, covering the mouth-piece with his hand.

"She says Mrs. Harrison has arranged a party this afternoon especially for some people to meet her; she cannot possibly break that engagement. And this evening she was going to be in town with Sue Harrison to have dinner with Kenneth and —"

"Let her get out of that engagement with Kenneth Harrison!" cried Harry. "And I don't care how she gets out of it!"

Uncle George considered; then spoke into the telephone again. "The firm requests me to ask you to call up Mr. Taylor at the Biltmore at eight-fifteen. He may have news for you. . . . Thank you. Good-bye."

"Well?" demanded Harry as Uncle George hung up.

"She'll meet us. Now, you go into my front room, and let an old man think about our end of the how and where."

While Harry strode restlessly up and down the living-room, pausing now and then to gaze with unseeing eyes out upon the midsummer greenness of Central Park, Uncle George lay considering. Where should he arrange this meeting? — which at the best would be dangerous. He could smuggle the pair into his apartment for an

hour. But, no; for them to meet any place where they were not seen or observed might remove all restraint from Harry; in his present frenzied mood, despite his promise, he might lose control of himself, he might do almost any desperate act. If they could meet in a public place, the very presence of others would impose self-control upon Harry. But that also was dangerous; such a public meeting might lead to recognition. And thus on and on Uncle George thought, measuring danger against danger, advantage against advantage . . . until an idea came to him that combined the good qualities of both privacy and publicity — though even in this there was risk. He thought of the little alcove on the Grantham roof garden, a part of the big roof and yet screened off from it. It could be privately reached, he remembered, by a tiny elevator which had been installed by the former owner of the Grantham for his exclusive use when he had made his home in a small tower that reached two stories above the roof. Uncle George knew all men along Broadway; therefore he knew the manager of the roof garden of the Grantham, and after two minutes on the telephone the screened alcove was his for that evening.

Arrayed in a purple dressing-gown, he told Harry where the meeting was to be and how the alcove was to be reached. "Be there at eight-thirty, son, and wait; no telling just when Jennie can show up. And wear your evening gown."

"How'll Jennie get there?"

"It won't be easy. But you leave it to her; she'll manage it. And also leave it to your Uncle George."

The afternoon was a period of burning suspense and searing misery to Harry. But at half-past eight, using

an almost unnoticeable doorway in a side street he entered a small hallway of the Grantham, and was shot upward in the little elevator, run by a wrinkled little man with the quick, furtive look of one who has been schooled to see everything and tell nothing. On stepping out he found himself in the secluded corner Uncle George had described to him. There was a table set for three. Through the barrier of foliage at his shoulder, he could see the big roof beyond filling with early dancers.

Hardly conscious of the light-hearted world curtained off from him by only a few leaves, he sat at the little table, tensely waiting, and striving to gather his forces for the approaching scene, which was to be the supreme crisis, the greatest fight, of his life.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE GREAT CROSS-ROADS

**I**T was nine o'clock when the private door through which he had entered opened again and Jennie appeared, Uncle George behind her. Uncle George immediately stepped back through the door, it closed, and Jennie came forward alone. She was a bit pale that first moment, but she crossed easily and gave her hand to Harry, who had risen unsteadily.

"Good-evening, Harry. Shall we sit down? Sorry to be so late. But I was with a party of people, and it was hard to get away. I managed so that we did n't go to a theater; they're all at another roof garden. I went out as if to answer a telephone call — I'd fixed that up with Uncle George — and I sent back word that I'd had a message from a friend and had to see the friend at once for a little while, and they were to wait for me. So here I am, Harry."

She was speaking almost against time; she wished to get control both of the situation and of herself. "Uncle George said you wanted to talk to me," she went on. "Be as quick as you can about it, for I've got to hurry back."

She seemed more beautiful, more desirable than ever, to Harry's eyes: with a filmy scarf of red and gold over her black hair, with her coat falling back from her white shoulders. He could not speak for looking at her.

"What is it, Harry?" she prompted him.

"That announcement of your engagement to Kenneth Harrison — is it true?"

"It is."

"Jennie!" he cried, and drew a sharp quivering breath. "Jennie, don't! For my sake, for your sake, don't!"

"That's no reason, Harry."

"Well, here is a reason, Jennie; down in your heart I'm the man you really love!"

Uncle George had told her of the danger; had told her that she must be calm and patient, and she tried so to be. "You've said that before, Harry. But it is n't so. I like you — I like you very much, for you're a nice boy. And I hope you are going to behave so that I may always like you. But it will never be anything else, Harry — never! And now I think I'd better be going."

Harry's hand shot across the little table as she started to rise and caught her wrist. "You can't leave yet!" he cried with all his heart's desperate eagerness. "You've got to hear me through! Can't you see what this means to me? It's my last chance — you've got to give me my chance, Jennie! And whatever your decision may be, I'll never bother you again — I swear I'll never bother you! — if only you'll listen to me now!"

She sank back into her chair. His words rushed on. "Jennie, listen to your own heart! Be your own self! I know you love me — we've always loved each other!" And then he went back and pictured their childhood — pictured it in detail — the experiences they had shared — the dreams they had dreamt together. "And that night when you were arrested, and you disappeared, I loved you' — and later when I found out what you were doing, I loved you, and I determined that I was going to work hard and develop and be somebody big. And all these years I've been doing that, Jennie. I've built



my whole life on you, Jennie! You are not really going to throw me down, Jennie — spoil your happiness — spoil my happiness — spoil everything that might be — you're not going to do that, Jennie! When I'm willing to keep on waiting, when I'm willing to fight my way to the top for your sake. Listen — here's something that'll show you: I've just been raised from fifty to seventy-five a week, and that's only the beginning! I know that, compared to Kenneth Harrison in a worldly sense, I'm nobody; he's got money and he's a swell to boot. But I'll work, Jennie — I'll wait — just break off this engagement and give me a chance to prove what I can do!"

Jennie was, indeed, strangely moved by the torrent of words that had rushed up from his heart — she felt a strange ache in his behalf. But she shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Harry. But it's no use. I like you, I like you a lot — but I don't like you that way."

He returned to the charge desperately, and went over it all again. In the midst of his plea, Uncle George, who had given them three quarters of an hour alone, took the third chair. When Harry ended, Jennie again shook her head.

"Now, let me have my little say, Harry, since Jennie has given you her answer," put in Uncle George. "And what I say, I say not so much for myself as I say for Black Jerry. Years ago he saw that, with his bad name, the only way for Jennie to have a chance was for her to cut entirely loose from him and be somebody else. She's done that, and she now is certainly somebody. If you were to marry her, it would naturally come out that she's Black Jerry's daughter — and Black Jerry,

after all he's done, would never stand for that happening to her."

"I don't care whose daughter she is," cried Harry. "It's all the same to me!"

"We don't even need to discuss that, Harry," Jennie spoke up. "The only points that count are that I don't love you, and that my mind is made up."

"Then you really think you are going to marry Kenneth Harrison?" he demanded.

"I am," she declared.

"By God, you're not!" he exploded. "He may have money and be a swell, but he's not fit —"

"Shut up!" she cried as sharply as ever in the old Pekin days. Her dark eyes were blazing at him. "If you change to the course of running another man down, it'll merely show you up as a cheap cad! And I won't believe it! And what's more, I'll ask Kenneth to marry me to-morrow!"

They glared at each other. For a moment they sat silent, their gazes defiant. Then a low, pleasant voice said:

"Good-evening, everybody."

They looked up with a start. In the narrow entrance from the roof to this arbor stood Slim Jackson. He advanced toward them, smiling.

"How are you, Jennie. How're you, Uncle George. How're you, Harry." Standing beside the table, a light graceful figure, he glowed good-fellowship down upon them. "Well, well, think of our all meeting together like this! If only Black Jerry were here, it'd be the regular old-time crowd."

"How did you know we were here?" demanded Uncle George.

"Accident," he answered lightly. "Was dancing by here a minute ago and thought I recognized Harry's voice, a little excited, talking about God and such details; so when the dance was over I just peeped in."

He now addressed himself to Jennie. "I'm here with a little party, Gloria Raymond among them."

"Then you've made up with Gloria?" queried Jennie.

"There was never anything to make up. I told you there would n't be. I'm sure she'll be glad to see you again, Jennie. Suppose I just bring her in."

With a smile Slim disappeared through the leafy entrance. For the moment Jennie forgot the matter of her errand here. If Slim, the unaccountable, the artful, who at times seemingly acted against his obvious interests, were to bring Gloria in here, and the vindictive Gloria were to discover her with Harry Edwards —

"Who is this Gloria?" asked Uncle George, breaking in upon her thought.

"A girl I went to school with; very rich. We never got on together."

Slim's voice sounded again close to her ear. There he was standing hardly more than a yard away, on the other side of the greenery, and beside him was Gloria Raymond.

"Just saw a friend of mine I want you to meet, Gloria." Jennie knew his voice was for her ears; and despite her efforts at self-control she shivered.

After a few moments Slim gave a chuckling laugh. "Don't seem to place her just now; come on, let's finish this dance" — and then Jennie knew that he had been merely playing with her, teasing her, taking delight in hinting at his obvious powers.

"He's sure a clever guy, Slim Jackson," observed Uncle George, with a sober shake of his head. "What he's done is sure a wonder. But that Gloria person, and any other dame he smiles at, they'd better take out the right sort of insurance policy."

"Let's forget him," Harry said brusquely. "I'm here to see Jennie, and this is the final show-down!"

He and Jennie looked at each other across the little table, as fixedly as before Slim's entrance, though there was not now the angry challenge and defiance that there had then been in their gaze. Harry's face was pale and strained. His hand, on top of the table, slowly clenched the cloth into a tight roll.

"Jennie," he breathed at length, "this is the last time. What is it to be?"

"I've already told you, Harry."

"You're going to marry him?"

"Yes."

"Then . . . this is final?"

"This is final, Harry."

She, too, had gone pale as she gazed into the white suffering of her old friend. "I'm awfully sorry, Harry," and she laid a hand upon the hand that was so tightly gripping the cloth.

"It was n't your pity I asked for, Jennie," and he drew his hand from within hers.

They gazed silently across at each other for several moments. Through the privet trees gayly sounded the strains of a fox trot . . . Jennie drew a long quivering breath.

"What time is it, Uncle George?"

"Ten o'clock."

"That late!" she breathed. "I must be leaving. And

I — I want to go right home. Silver Bluffs, I mean. We were all going to motor back there to-night. If I asked Kenneth to drive over here, do you suppose I could get out the main entrance without — you know — our being seen together?"

"Easy," replied Uncle George.

There was a little wall telephone, all finished in green, in the alcove, and into this Jennie spoke for a minute or so.

"He said they'd all be waiting down in front in five minutes," she announced when she turned back to the others.

Uncle George rang the bell of the private elevator. The shriveled little elevator-man with the keen eyes and the closed-seeming face — the old man had been picked for this job because of his reticence — was a long time in appearing. Neither Jennie nor Harry spoke, and in an attempt to lessen the strain between the two, Uncle George talked with great discernment about nothing in particular — and continued his flow of unheeded wisdom down the long descent of the elevator. When they were discharged into the tiny hallway, Uncle George tipped the old man with a dollar; and the old man, giving a glance with his keen eyes at the faces of the silent, distraught young pair, stepped into his cage and disappeared.

Uncle George pointed to a door. "Jennie, through there is the way to the main lobby. You'd better go alone."

"All right." She held out her hand to Harry. She had grown yet more pale, and her voice was merely a whisper. "Good-bye, Harry . . . and I know there'll sometime . . . be a better girl."



He managed to keep himself erect, and gazed straight into her eyes: in his own was the infinite agony of a world that is lost. "Good-bye, Jennie . . . I wish you the best of luck." And then again: "I wish you the best of luck!"

She withdrew her hand and moved down the little hallway and, slightly bowed, passed through the door Uncle George had indicated. Harry, motionless, watched her to the last. Then silently he and Uncle George stepped from the hallway into the side street.

The night was raucous with the voices of newsboys shouting an extra. "Sounds like a murder," remarked Uncle George; and bought an "Evening Telegram" from a bellowing vendor. The next instant, his eyes on the huge headline, he clutched Harry's arm.

"Great God!" he gasped, "Larry Murdock's just been killed!"

But all Harry's senses were so definitely fixed elsewhere that he did not even hear Uncle George. He walked on toward the Avenue.

"And it says they don't know yet who killed him!" exclaimed Uncle George.

Harry kept mechanically on. At the corner he paused, and his gaze, turned up the Avenue, fixed upon the front of the hotel. He was not even conscious of Uncle George, at his side, staring with loose face at the "Telegram's" four-line story of the murder. He saw only a low-built touring car — in its tonneau two figures, Sue Harrison and Billy Grayson, though he did not then know who they were — and in the driver's seat Kenneth Harrison. Then he saw Kenneth spring out of the car — saw Jennie come out of the Grantham's main entrance and cross the sidewalk — saw Kenneth with a smile on his hand-

some face, and with the manner of proud ownership, help her in, and place himself at her side — and then saw the car move away.

It was at that moment that to Harry Edwards the world seemed to come to a definite end.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### HOW HARRY USED A USELESS LIFE

**H**OW he got there, or why he came there, Harry Edwards never knew; but at twelve o'clock that same night he sank down at a solitary table in Black Jerry's café. Perhaps he had been guided by the subconscious urge to get back to the scene of Jennie's early life — back where there had been no barriers between them. He afterwards remembered only wandering in a wild daze, keeping away from main streets, having no purpose, conscious only of the pain he bore within him; and he remembered slipping once, twice, several times, through doorways in these obscure streets and swallowing the raw stuff they set forth as anodyne for that vast agony which seemed now alone to constitute his being.

At Black Jerry's he again ordered whiskey and it was brought him. He gulped it down.

"Telephone call for you a little while ago, Harry," said the waiter.

"A' ri'," Harry replied indifferently. "Bring 'nother whiskey."

He noted, very dimly, that the regular habitués of the Pekin, those from the neighborhood, were drawn close together in little groups, and were talking in excited undertones. He dimly sensed that there was something out of the usual in their behavior, but he was not conscious enough to wonder what it might mean.

He had another drink — and another — and another. But as yet one more was being brought him, Black

Jerry appeared beside his table and motioned the waiter away.

"Take back that drink, Sid," Jerry ordered. "Harry don't want it."

"Wha's tha'?" demanded Harry, angrily trying to rise. "I ordered tha' drink — I got money to pay — I got ri' to drink it!"

"Sit down, Harry," and Jerry firmly pushed him back into his chair and sat down beside him. "You ain't used to booze, and you've got more 'n you can carry now. See here, Harry," — with gruff kindness, — "I been watching you. Something must have happened to start you off like this. What's wrong?"

Harry's blood-shot eyes glowered defiantly. "None your damn' business!"

"Oh, yes, it is. I've known you since you was a kid. You know I'm your friend. Come across — what's eating you?"

Harry pondered this. Then he leaned over the table and whispered: "Jerry, I've jus' seen her!"

Black Jerry needed no explanation. He glanced about. Their table was in a rear corner, and no one was within hearing distance.

"You stiff," he whispered, half savagely. "Don't you know that's dangerous! Did anybody see you with her?"

"Think not. Jus' Jennie — Uncle George — m'self. Yes, Slim Jackson saw us."

"Slim Jackson!" A groan sounded deep down in Jerry's chest. "If Slim Jackson starts anything, I'll attend to him. What'd you see her for?"

"You know — her engagement — Kenneth Harrison?"

"Yes."

Harry's blood-shot gaze became defiant again. "Guess you know I'd always banked on her marrying me. Had to see her to put up fight for my own case — my last chance. Well — she turned me down. Tha's wha's matter with me!"

"You better forget all about it." Black Jerry nodded. "We're in the same boat, Harry. I've give her up, too."

"You!" flared Harry. "You're only her father!"

Black Jerry was tolerantly silent.

"She's turned me down!" Harry repeated wildly. "My God, Jerry, she's turned me down! And me" — clutching his crumpled shirt — "I don't care now what happens to me! I'm through!"

Jerry perceived the dangerous recklessness of the other's mood; perceived that Harry should be both humored and handled with firmness. "You're a bit off your bean, Harry — you've had too much booze. Come on, I'm going to take you home."

"Won't go home!" declared Harry.

"Now, Harry," persuaded Jerry, "we're pals, you and me. Ain't we both had to give her up? That makes us pals, don't it? There's nothing I would n't do for you. So let your old pal take you home."

"Won't go home!" And Harry settled stubbornly in his chair.

Black Jerry recognized that he had to change to a new tack. He had to keep Harry engaged until his mood changed, and he chose the topic of interest closest at hand.

"Who do you think shot him, Harry?"

"Shot who?"

Jerry stared. "You mean you ain't heard! If you'd



been alive you'd have learned right here — it's all that the bunch in this joint have talked about. I mean the murder of Larry Murdock. Ain't you heard?"

Harry recalled exclamations, unheeded at the time, of Uncle George over the extra bought outside the Grantham. And he began to apprehend that this matter had connection with the life that had been his in that far-away time before he had learned of Jennie's engagement.

"Yes, I heard," he answered.

"Who do you think shot Murdock?"

Harry shook his head. "Don' know nothing about it. Who you think?"

"The talk in here all runs that that big fight between Murdock and Conway was behind it. They think that some one who was strong for Conway must have done it. Guess that's the way the coppers'll size it up, too. We're all sure something big is about to break down in this part of town. All that this crowd in here is doing is wondering what's going to happen next, and wondering who the guy is that croaked Murdock, and wondering if the coppers'll grab him."

For the moment Black Jerry forgot Harry's troubles. This was a world-event to him, and another was impending. Harry, too, his faculties quickened a bit, sensed something of the situation's importance.

Before either spoke again, the waiter who had served Harry laid a hand on the young fellow's shoulder. "Telephone call for you again," he said.

Harry swayed into a booth and closed the door. "Hello," he called.

"Is that Harry Edwards?" asked the voice on the wire.

"Yes."

"Don't mention any names, but do you know who this is?"

Next to Jennie's that voice was the one he would have most quickly recognized anywhere.

"Yes."

"I've got to see you, Harry — quick. Can you meet me at the office in ten minutes?"

"Sure."

"Then I'll go right over to the office. If things are dark, come right in anyhow. The door'll be unlocked. And, Harry, better not let anybody see you come."

"All right." There were a few more sentences, then Harry hung up. That friendly voice, anxious, coaxing, yet imperative, had cleared his murky brain yet a little more. He had been asked to come alone. Through the glass door of the booth he eyed Black Jerry, and planned with befuddled cunning. Then he stepped out, and moved to Jerry's side.

"That was just a crazy fellow I know — wants me to meet him uptown," he explained. "But you're right, Jerry. Thing for me to do is to go home."

"Glad you see it that way, Harry. I'll just go with you like I said."

"I'm all right. Don't need any one."

"Of course you don't," replied Jerry placatingly. "I'll just go along for the air."

"That's not so," returned Harry with shrewd belligerence. "You don't trust me. All right. You don't trust me to go alone, then I stay here."

He started to sit down. Black Jerry was acquainted with the vagaries and obstinacies of men in liquor, and knew that often the only way to manage them was to yield to them.

"All right. Go home alone, then, Harry. And go right to bed. Good-night."

"Good-night," said Harry.

He made a fairly even course past the energetic two-piece orchestra, and out into the street, where he turned southward. Drawing up the collar of his summer overcoat so that all the white of his evening dress was blotted out, he furtively slipped through block after block, till he came to the building across whose ground-floor window one could read in daylight

### SAMUEL CONWAY

#### REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE

That window was now dark, but the door, as Harry had been told, was unlocked. Harry entered, closed the door, crossed the big outer room, and opened the door of the private office. Here, likewise, all was blackness. Harry closed this inner door, then called in a low whisper:

"Sam!"

"All right, Harry."

The room suddenly filled with light. If one desired perfect privacy, there was no risk once the door was closed; the room had no window, hence no betraying gleams could filter out into the night.

"Good boy, Harry — you were prompt all right!"

"Sure, Sam. I beat it straight down here."

Even to Harry, blinking at the sudden brightness, and though only half-master of his faculties, the Sam Conway he now saw was a startling contrast. The big, florid, hearty man of such genial assurance, was pasty, flaccid tense.

"What's the matter, Sam?" exclaimed Harry.

"I'm sure up against it, Harry." He tried to laugh, but the laugh was thin, shaky; it was nothing like the laugh that had helped make him the personage he had become. "Of all the mistakes that ever happened — of all the crazy breaks a man ever got — But let's sit down, Harry." And when they had done so: "Of course you've heard about what happened to Larry Murdock?"

"Yes. But what I want to know, Sam, is, what's the matter with you?"

"Why, there's nothing the matter with me, Harry," Conway laughed — his thin, unnatural laugh — "nothing the matter at all, except the little item that the police think I croaked Murdock and are after me."

"You!" cried Harry.

"Did n't I tell you that this thing was crazy enough to be funny if it was n't so serious?"

"But how do you know the police think you did it?"

"An inspector, a pal of mine, tipped me off so I'd have a chance to make a get-away. That was really how I learned Murdock had been croaked. On the face of it, it looks a bad case for me, Harry — there's no denying that. I knew the last place the wise coppers would ever expect me to be was my office, so I beat it for here to think the mess over."

"But, Sam," ejaculated Harry, "how did it ever happen?"

"Part of it I can tell you, part I can only guess at. You know I was to have dinner with Murdock to-night — it was at Halloran's off Third Avenue. We were to see if, by getting together, we could n't straighten out all this mess. But Murdock would n't give an inch. We both got hot; Murdock said he was going to the District Attorney to-morrow morning with his evidence. I guess

I lost my temper at that, and said some things — yes, I know I did, and who would n't? I left Halloran's right after that, and that's everything that I know at first hand."

"But what did the inspector tell you?" breathed Harry.

"When Murdock came out later, somebody waiting in the street let him have it. In my opinion it was somebody that had a private grudge against him — he's always been a trouble-maker and has got a world of enemies. But because of my losing my temper and saying what I did in the restaurant, the police are going to try to fasten the job on me — at least that's the tip my inspector friend got to me. Now, Harry, I'm not the best man alive, but I don't need to swear to you that I don't try to settle arguments by croaking the other guy in the dark."

"I should say you don't, Sam!" Harry cried hotly. "You're always on the level — out in the open! The coppers are crazy — they're always pulling bone-head plays and getting shown up. There's nothing for you to worry about, Sam!"

"I wish you were right — but there's an awful lot for me to worry about." Sam Conway spoke distinctly, looking Harry directly into the eyes. "I'm strictly up against it, even though I'm innocent. I'd be a fool if I did n't see the whole situation. I'm due to be pinched to-night. And with me arrested on a murder charge, I'll lose out in the coming election — all the connections I've built up will go to smash — the people I've helped into good positions and good businesses will lose them. Everything will go. And when I'm cleared, as I will be, everything will have passed out of my hands. And



Harry — I'm an old man — I'm sixty years old; if I lose hold now, I'm through. I'm too old to begin the fight all over. So you see what I'm up against — what hundreds and thousands of people will be up against if I'm arrested to-night."

"I see!" exclaimed Harry. "God! is n't there some way out?"

"That's what I sent for you to talk about, Harry." Sam Conway's full lips were hanging loose and twitching nervously. He spoke with febrile eagerness, yet with restraint. "There is a way out. If —" He paused in a way to magnify a hundred times the importance of that "if."

"If what, Sam? Tell me!"

"If you would be willing to do something for me, Harry — the biggest sort of thing."

"Sam, you've been my best friend — I owe everything to you. I'll do anything you say. What is it?"

"Harry — will you stand to be pinched in my place?"

"You mean — for the Murdock murder?" breathed Harry.

"Yes. Listen, Harry — I've got it all thought out." The great Conway reached across and seized Harry's knees in a grasp that partook partly of the quality of an imploring caress and partly of a convulsive clutch. His words came with a rush. "It's like this, Harry. If I'm pinched, there's a tremendous smash-up for everybody, and no come-back for me, since I'm an old man. I'm in public life — that's why the smash will be so big. If you're pinched, it's not going to hurt you so much; you're in private life, and you're young. You'll get out in a little while, and nobody'll ever even remember it except me — and what I've helped you to in

the past won't be a two-spot compared to what I'll do in the future!"

"But, Sam," gasped the dazed Harry, "can it be done?"

"Easy! All they've got to connect me up with the murder, so I understand, are the threats I made in the restaurant. It seems nobody saw the actual shooting. Harry, if you are pinched for the murder before the coppers get to me, and if two or three guys turn up to say they saw you shoot Murdock — don't you see that that leaves me out of it clean, and leaves me in a shape to go right on with the big things I'm doing? And you, Harry — when the case comes to trial, there'll be no one to testify against you — I'll attend to all that — and your case will be dismissed, and all you'll be out will be the weeks or few months you've been locked up in the Tombs. You'll be in just as good shape as ever! Better! — for I'll not forget what you've done for me!

"And, Harry," he argued on rapidly, as if to forestall and overcome possible scruples, "there's nothing new in this proposition of getting a guy that the police can't fix anything on to stand for an arrest to help out a friend who's in trouble. You know it's done every day down here. Only I guess there's never been a case before where a guy could help his friend so much! Quick, Harry — will you do it? There's hardly a second to waste — and we've got to frame things for the coppers!"

Whatever else his circumstances might have been, Harry Edwards's decision might have been the same. But just now he was bitter and reckless — partly from alcohol — more from what had induced the drinking, the agony, the sense of life's emptiness, that the final loss of Jennie had brought upon him.

He gripped Conway's hand. "Sam, you're the best friend I've got. I'll stand for the arrest, and anything else you want of me. And I'm glad to do it, Sam" — his voice was husky — "it's the best thing that there's left for me to do!"

But already Conway had his telephone receiver off the hook. An instant later he was talking rapidly.

"That you, Tim? . . . Harry Edwards is the man you want for that Murdock shooting. Better send out a general alarm for him. Be quick and you'll have the pinch made in time for the morning papers. Joe Graves and Jack Pearson saw him do the shooting; you know where to find them. . . . Motive? . . . Why, I guess he'd been drinking a bit and was excitable; and Conway was his friend and he knew about Murdock's threats against Conway, and so when he saw his chance he just let Murdock have it. That ought to explain things."

Conway hung up, rose, and fairly drew Harry to his feet. "In five minutes every copper and plain-clothesman in town'll be after you — better beat it, quick, so as not to get pinched down here near me."

He reached for a switch, and the next instant his twitching, loose-hanging features were a part of the darkness. He guided Harry to the outer door.

"Try to make Fourteenth Street before you're arrested," he whispered rapidly. "The farther away from here, the better. Remember, this is going to be for only a few months — and that I'll never forget it — and that there will be nothing I won't do for you! Good-bye!"

With that Harry was thrust out and the door was closed. Automatically he started through the dark, quiet streets for the brighter regions of the city. But even as

he walked toward arrest, all this business was of minor consequence: his mind did not reach forward and vision some one halting him and snapping bracelets of steel upon his wrists. What he saw was Jennie crossing from the Grantham to Kenneth Harrison's car . . . was Kenneth's possessive manner as he helped her into a seat . . . was Jennie sitting by Kenneth's side as she rode away out of his life.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE WEB OF LIFE

THE breakfast-room at Silver Bluffs the next morning was as softly radiant as if the air were an impalpable solution of luminous gold. A gentle eastern breeze, sauntering across the Sound from its birthplace out upon the wide ocean, bore sea-fragrance and a broad exhilaration through open doors and windows. Nature did not know how to bring out of the night a more gracious summer morning.

But when Jennie came in to breakfast a trifle late — at Silver Bluffs the family breakfast was served at seven-forty-five for the sake of the city-going men — she did not so much as note the rare splendor of the day. Most of the night she had kept going through again and again that scene with Harry on the Grantham roof, and she had kept seeing the despairing yet quiet look which he had given her at parting. Her decision had been wise and proper — she knew that; but the approval of her judgment had not brought her that calm which is the necessary prelude to sleep. So she was worn this morning, and nervous, though her habit of self-control enabled her to seem the usual Jennie.

She had just said good-morning to the others and had attacked her grape-fruit, when a sharp exclamation from Mr. Harrison caused her to raise her eyes. Mr. Harrison was staring, mouth loosely open, at the morning paper he had just taken from beside his plate.

“God!” he gasped — “God!”

“What is it?” cried the startled Mrs. Harrison.



He did not even look at her. Instead he addressed his son.

"Kenneth — Murdock's dead!"

"Dead!" ejaculated Kenneth.

"Murdered — shot last night!"

This Murdock was barely more than a name to Jennie; his fate had so little interest to her that only her outer consciousness was aware of what had been said. But she did notice that a look of vast relief had come into the face Mr. Harrison held upon his son, and that a similar, if lesser, relief was in Kenneth's face.

For a moment, in the significance and the surprise of the event, the two men forgot that they were not alone.

"Kenneth, that clears up our situation entirely!" exclaimed the older man in a marveling tone. "Understand what it means to our business?"

"Of course! We're in better shape than ever!"

"And the very day we thought matters were going to explode for us!"

"We're certainly playing in luck! And so is Sam Conway!" A quick, keen look came into Kenneth's face. "Who killed Murdock — Conway?"

"I don't know. I've only just seen the headlines."

Mr. Harrison glanced back at the paper and skimmed the text. The next moment he was looking up, new astoundment in his face.

"Murdock was killed by that young man in our office — you know, Harry Edwards!"

Out of her apathy Jennie came staringly to her feet. "Killed by Harry Edwards?" she cried.

"That's what the paper says."

"Killed by Harry Edwards!" she repeated with a shivering gasp. Only her hands, one of which clutched

her chair's back and the other the edge of the table, prevented her toppling over.

"Why, Jennie — what's the matter?" cried Kenneth, springing up to her side and seizing her in his arms.

She saw that all were gazing at her in amazement. Fighting for self-control, she managed a smile, though it was a very white one. "I'm all right now. I guess it was just the shock. You know — the shock of a man I'd met in this house, and once had danced with, actually doing such a thing."

"I understand perfectly," said Mrs. Harrison in her soft, sympathetic voice. "Perhaps you'd better lie down in your room, and I'll have breakfast brought up to you a little later."

"Thanks. I will. But don't bother about breakfast — I shan't care for any. And don't come along, please" — this last smilingly to Kenneth who was supporting her with an encircling arm as she started out — "I'm all right, I tell you. Please go back and finish your breakfast."

He relinquished her, and she walked out steadily enough. But instead of going up to her bed, she sank upon the great leather couch in the living-room. She lay tense, hardly breathing — watching for them to come out from breakfast. She remembered that only one morning paper was delivered to the family at Silver Bluffs; that Mr. Harrison glanced it through perfunctorily, and left it behind for the family to read when he started for the city.

When they came out she sprang up and declared herself to be thoroughly recovered from her flurry of nerves. She watched for Mr. Harrison to toss aside the paper as

was his wont. But this once Mr. Harrison held on to it, and when the *Myra* began its swift thrust through the waters, a white blossom of spray springing into sudden bloom at its bow, she saw him in the shelter of the after-deck again reading the front page.

For a space Jennie was foiled — sick with suspense. Just what was it that Harry had done? What had happened to him? She recalled that William, the butler, had his own favorite paper brought him every morning. She went into the dining-room, away from Sue and her mother, on the excuse that after all she would have her breakfast there; then told William that she had changed her mind and would eat nothing, borrowed his paper, and slipped out the side entrance and down the bluff to that bit of silvery beach where a few weeks since she had talked with Harry. Seated behind the big boulder she began to read.

For one brief day Larry Murdock, comparatively unimportant though he may have been in his life, in his death forced European events, then hurrying toward the outbreak of the Great War, to let him share with them the front page upon terms of equality — for big local politics were involved. The story, as the paper gave it, and as it came from the police, Jennie at once saw to be an appallingly perfect case against Harry. Inspector Timothy Dixon, interviewed, had his evidence convincingly arrayed; the account praised him for the amazing celerity and completeness with which he had handled the affair. Two witnesses, Joseph Graves and John Pearson, had seen Edwards shoot Murdock as the latter came out of Halloran's café, and had then seen Edwards vanish around a corner. Edwards had managed to evade the police for a time, but had been arrested by Detectives

O'Brien and Casey as he was trying to enter a taxicab on Fourteenth Street. His motive for the murder (still according to Inspector Timothy Dixon) was very simple: Edwards was a partisan of Alderman Samuel Conway — there was a bitter political feud between Conway and Murdock, and young Edwards had thought to serve his patron and gain greater favor by eliminating Conway's antagonist.

Conway, interviewed, had said with the solemnity of one awed by sudden death: "Boys, no one can be more sorry over this than I am! Murdock and I had our differences, yes — but they were personal and could have been smoothed over. Harry Edwards must have got an exaggerated idea of their danger to me — and being impetuous he must have thought he could help me this way. In spite of what he's done, I want to tell you that he's a good, square chap." Which was a fine, generous, upstanding statement, the account declared.

Edwards, interviewed, had maintained a stolid silence — the usual stolidity, so the paper characterized it, of the murderer who knows that his least words may incriminate him.

Jennie was dazed. She believed every word of the account — it was so simple, so convincing, so in keeping with just what Harry would do. He was guilty — yes — but she in a degree was also responsible. Her refusal had driven him to it. For a space she sat staring out at the Sound, shivering, a wild tearing within her. He was a nice boy, she liked him — she *really* liked him. And she had driven him to this! And for such a deed, with his guilt so obvious, she knew well what the penalty would be! . . .

Trembling all through, she took up the paper and with a fearful fascination read the story again, and again, and again. It was not until the fourth reading that her brain caught a fragment of a sentence that her frantic eyes had thus far skimmed over without seeing: "*The victim, leaving Halloran's café at 9.15 . . .*"

She straightened up with a jerk and a gasp. At 9.15! Why, at 9.15 Harry had been with her on the roof of the Grantham!

Then Harry had not done it! . . .

What, then, did it all mean? What was behind it? . . .

But even during her first minutes of astounded relief, even while she first began to try to peer behind the event for its meaning, she perceived a fresh aspect to the affair, and she sank back, sickened and terrified anew. For whatever it might mean, her life, her dreams, were enmeshed in it all. The more she examined the implications of the situation, the more she looked forward upon its possible developments, the more sickened did she become. . . .

At length she could stand it no longer. She had to know! She sprang up, dominated by a desperate determination. She used caution, she used methods she had previously used, and at twelve o'clock she was waiting in a sitting-room at the Plaza when Uncle George entered. There was a rapid talk with the old man, and then she declared:

"You see how it is. I simply must see Harry — somehow! I've simply got to know at first hand what his situation is — and mine!"

"But don't you see the danger of your going down to the Tombs?" demanded Uncle George.

"It's no greater than what I'm in now, not under-



standing what's going to happen. Can't you manage it, Uncle George, please?"

"If I can't, then there are a lot of used-to-be friends down there who are n't my friends any longer. Come on."

Inside the taxi Jennie veiled herself; the veil was the same that she had worn to her Aunt Mary's burial, and the plain dark suit she had changed into was the same she had then worn. Uncle George discussed ways and means with her all the ride down to the dingy granite building with its heavily grilled windows which has been the stage for an act in so many of the city's dramas.

"Wait here till I get everything fixed up," Uncle George whispered as he got out.

She drew back into the corner of the taxi, and gazed out at the grimy building, so familiar a sight of her earlier girlhood. Harry was in there — somewhere. And it came to her that long, long ago her father had lain within those same gray, implacable walls for a year and more.

Presently Uncle George opened the door. "It's all right — come on." And as they crossed the sidewalk: "I think I've got it fixed so we'll not meet with any of the newspaper boys, who'd jump out of their skins to mix up a 'mysterious pretty girl' in this business."

The outer door of the Tombs was opened to them, and they were admitted into a big, dingy anteroom where uniformed clerks scribbled at desks and keepers kept in line the huddled, strained-faced folk who had come to make brief visits upon relatives or friends confined within. All her senses quickened to abnormal perception, Jennie took in everything — those clerks forever scratching down details about prisoners, these

silent, huddling visitors, the brusque, herding keepers: but even so, she had no slightest prevision of that time, in the unfolding of life, when she was to look upon this same scene with very different eyes and under circumstances strangely different.

Just as passes to the inner prison were handed them, Jennie became conscious of a figure immediately behind her that wore a derby hat, and had a heavy, impassive face. Her brain flashed back four years; a yet further fear clutched her.

"Hello, Uncle George," said the man.

"Hello, Casey," replied Uncle George. "That was some little pinch you made of Edwards last night."

"My side partner really picked Edwards off; just called me in to help him," replied Casey.

Here in this great jail and that Casey beside her! With her every sharp breath Jennie expected the detective's hand to fall heavily upon her shoulder. But Casey allowed them to pass on; apparently he had not even seen her.

She was searched by two matrons, was admitted through a little wicket, was guided through a corridor that smelled of damp darkness and ten thousand prisoners, and was ushered into the bare counsel's room and the grilled door was locked behind her. And there was Harry, still in the evening clothes, now grimy and disarrayed, in which she had seen him hardly more than a dozen hours before.

"You!" he exclaimed, startled. And then, straightening up stiffly, he demanded: "Well, what do you want?"

Now that she was here, Jennie hardly knew why: she was such a chaos of reasons and emotions.

"Well, what do you want?" he repeated brusquely.

She glanced behind her at the grilled door. But a bill slipped to the keeper by Uncle George had induced that official to stroll down the corridor and give the pair a brief privacy. She drew nearer Harry, and said in a whisper that could not carry beyond the door of steel: "Harry — you never did it!"

His expression was blank. "Oh, I did n't?"

"No. When it was done you were with me!"

His face was still blank. "Oh, was I?"

Her words, the thought she had been brooding over since she had read the butler's paper down on the little beach, now came out with a rush. "Don't you see the whole situation, Harry?" she cried. "I believed you were guilty when I first read the newspaper. It's so complete and convincing! And everybody else will believe it — and the judge will believe it — and the jury will believe it. And, Harry, you were with me — I can alibi you — and I'm the only person who can alibi you!"

He seemed to her strangely grim and inflexible for Harry. "Go on," he said. "That's not all that's in your mind."

"No." Her voice was now not merely low, it was weak. "There's my side of it all. If I go into court and alibi you, they'll cross-question me — and it'll all come out who I really am — about my being arrested for that old forgery — about my running away from Casey. Don't you see what a story the papers would make of it! And I'll lose everything dad's worked for and wanted me to be — everything I've — everything — Don't you see it all, Harry?"

He regarded her keenly for a long space. Then he spoke calmly, in an even voice.

"Yes, I think I see it all as you see it in your mind."

It's a big predicament for Jennie Malone; it's one of two things. Either you don't come forward and alibi me, and you keep your place up in the big world. Or else you do alibi me, and all you and Black Jerry have done, and all you've won, goes to smash for you. There are the two sides to your situation — yes?"

"Yes. Only — if I don't alibi you, the jury will find you guilty — and the judge will — oh, Harry! . . . I don't understand it at all! I don't know what to do!"

A swift hope leaped into the face he had kept so composed, and he seized her hand. "Perhaps we can simplify your situation, Jennie" — his voice was eager, vibrant with suspense — "if you were to alibi me, and you were to lose everything, would you marry me?"

"Harry!" she said faintly; "I thought we'd talked that all out."

The eagerness died out of his face. He loosed her hand and drew himself up squarely.

"I knew you would n't. Then" — very deliberately — "the thing for you to do is to go back to the Harrisons and live your life exactly as you had planned."

"But you, Harry?"

He glanced at the barred door to be sure that the keeper was not listening. "I'm in no danger," he whispered; "real danger, I mean."

"I knew there was something strange about all this!" she whispered back. "What does it all mean?"

He considered for a moment. "I'll tell you a little. It's like this: another man's in danger, and I'm going to stand trial in his place. They can't prove anything against me when the case comes to trial — you see, the witnesses will have disappeared — and I'll go free, having helped the other man. See?"

"I see!" She had comprehended it in a flash. Such arrangements, "frame-ups" against the police and courts, had been common in the life which had been hers until four years before. "Harry — you are doing it to save Sam Conway!"

"We'll not mention any names, Jennie. All you need to know is that I'm not in any danger. And I would n't have told you this much, only — well, if I'm not to have you, I don't want you to have any worries on my account. I want you to be just as happy as you can be. And as for me, this is the best job I could do — and I'm not going to mind it so much, and it's going to come out all right for me."

The keeper appeared without and announced that the allotted time was ended. Harry took her hand.

"I guess this is where we part company forever," he said quietly. "You'll be going your way, and I'll be going mine. I guess it's up to all of us to live our lives in our own way. Well, here's wishing you the best of luck. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she said.

The door closed behind her. She glanced back. Despite the cell, despite his disordered, incongruous evening clothes, her last glimpse of Harry gave her an impression of an older, a more manly and characterful figure than he had ever been in her mind.

As she hurried through the corridors the clang of each steel door behind her was a direct impact upon her raw nerves. But the sharpest impact of all came out in the street, when Uncle George was helping her into the taxi. And that impact was merely the quietest of whispers sounding close against her ear:

"I'm still hoping you make good, Jennie. But, re-



member, if the breaks ever go against you, the pinch belongs to me."

She went chill. That voice she knew only too well. With a great effort she turned about. But, his back toward her, Detective Sergeant Casey was moving in his slow-footed manner toward the Criminal Courts Building.

Even when she was safely back in the luxury and seclusion of Silver Bluffs, that low, even voice of Casey kept whispering its message in her ears.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE GREAT STEP

HARRY'S assurance that he was a willing party to a frame-up brought Jennie relief. But a restlessness of soul developed, though she controlled all external manifestations of it. She had won much, very much — but she was not satisfied with herself; and a sense of uncertainty, of insecurity, began to fill her with shadows. She was finding Life, which she had believed could be easily managed if one only took the proper thought, becoming very complex and showing hints of instability.

So it was that when Kenneth began to urge a very early marriage, she consented. Marriage would bring order and security out of all this complexity. They at once began the business of house-hunting: rather Kenneth did it all through a broker, and Jennie had nothing to do but choose between the two apartments to which the selection had already been sifted down — and even between these two Kenneth had already established his preference before she had seen either.

She was rather appalled by the magnificence of his choice the afternoon Kenneth took her to see it. Despite herself, as she stood in the living-room, there flashed upon her the contrast between this large room and the room where she had seen Harry but a few days before.

“Kenneth — fifteen rooms and six baths! I never saw an apartment like it!”

“I should say not,” he laughed. “There are not

many more like it on Park Avenue — or in New York, either.”

“But we don’t need anything so large the first year.”

“Oh, yes, we do!” He put his arm about her. “Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Harrison will be doing a lot of entertaining this winter — and we can’t be having the best people of New York at any cheap-John place. We’re going to be the real people — don’t you forget that!”

The best people of New York! Yes, that was where she was now — among the best people of New York. And once she was away from the friendly and experienced guidance of Mrs. Harrison and in her own home, she would have to face the great brilliant world all alone. She caught a sharp breath. Could she do it? . . .

When he told her the yearly rental she was again taken aback. “Nine thousand dollars!” she breathed. “Kenneth, can we — you, I mean — afford that much just for rent?”

He laughed, delighted at the effect of it all upon her. “The rent’s nothing!” And then he explained: “I’m not going to bother you much about business, Jennie, but it’s like this: I guess you know that things looked pretty bad for the firm because of some trouble which threatened Mr. Conway from that Mr. Murdock Edwards killed. But now — since Conway is out of danger — the firm’s in better shape than it ever was before. And besides, I’m carrying a lot of stock in several companies making steel — and the stock’s booming and there’s going to be a tremendous clean-up.” He ended with his light, half-humorous laugh at himself. “I ought to be arrested; it’s simply scandalous the way I’m making money — and the way I’m going to make more money!”

She had winced at his reference to Harry as Murdock's slayer; but that feeling she had instantly suppressed. After all, Kenneth had spoken only out of ignorance. . . . And as she gazed upon him, standing there by the great Italian fireplace, his naturally pale face a little flushed by his recital of business success, her admiration of him so mounted that she was almost dizzy with it. He was so handsome — so at his ease — so thoroughly a man of the great world — and so marvelously successful! And with it all, he was still only twenty-nine!

The apartment was to be ready for occupancy in October. The weeks that followed were largely filled for Jennie with visits to the city to supervise, with Kenneth and his mother, the decoration and to purchase furnishings. It was a thrilling experience, this making such a wonderful home — so thrilling, so consuming, that she was hardly aware these late summer days of 1914 that war had just then lighted its giant conflagration over all Europe. . . .

When Kenneth had pressed an early marriage, Jennie had made only one definite request. This was that the marriage should be as quiet as a marriage could be. She gave her reasons — of course not her real ones. She had had no pictures taken since she had left the Pekin; and she knew that at a show-wedding there would be reporters and also unfoitable men snapping their cameras. She felt safe after so many years; but all the same she did not want her face appearing in millions of New York papers — not just yet.

There was no trouble over this request for a quiet wedding. Kenneth consented and Mrs. Harrison thought the idea most sensible, and it increased her esteem for Jennie. Jennie, planning with utmost caution

these final details of her transformation, made another suggestion to Kenneth. It seemed to him a mere whim, but at the same time he saw no reason why he should not gratify it: so one September day the two of them motored into the interior of New York to a county seat where records are not too closely watched over by reporters and their data telegraphed to the great city.

Jennie had thought over one last item very carefully, and as they stood before the license clerk she remarked:

"Oh, there's one thing, Kenneth, I'd almost forgotten. Miller was my uncle's name and I was always called that, but he never really adopted me. My father's name was Malone — so I suppose my legal name is Jennie Malone."

"Lucky you remembered to mention it," said Kenneth — and after the next few minutes it had passed out of his mind as a matter of no consequence.

And so on the records she was married as "Jennie Malone." The announcements, however, which had been prepared by Mrs. Harrison gave her name as "Jennie Miller" — and the next day the marriage of Jennie Miller and Kenneth Harrison filled considerable space in the New York papers, though unfortunately there were no pictures of the young bride.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE SUPREME PLAN

EARLY in November Jennie and Kenneth were settled in their apartment on Park Avenue and had begun to take part in the preliminary activities of the social season. But already the wonder of the apartment, which had so overwhelmed Jennie when she first had seen it in August, and of all the apartment symbolized, had almost abated. With Jennie it was as it ever is with those who are ambitious, who are energetic, who quickly adapt themselves; the daring aspiration, once it is achieved, swiftly settles into an accepted and almost commonplace fact of life, and becomes in its turn merely the taking-off point for another flight into yet higher realms. By the day she began living in it Jennie was accustomed — almost, that is — to her wondrously lofty home, and within the privacy of her smooth, girlish forehead she already had plans looking far into the future.

Even during the bewildering days following her unexpected engagement, she had dimly perceived a certain distant contingency, and she had reached a certain conclusion; and after her marriage all her thinking along this line had made that conclusion seem more wise and necessary. Her conclusion was that as a wife she had to be the most successful wife possible: to be less might be failure. She knew that Kenneth was infatuated with her just then; but she had enough of a mature woman's wisdom — in her case it was as much precocity as it was the remembrance of the roughly direct human

nature of her early youth — to know that after a year, or even less, the thrill and glamour of the initial infatuation may begin to subside and the man inevitably may begin to reckon the material consequence of what he has done. She realized that Kenneth, in marrying her instead of Gloria, or Gloria's equivalent, had sacrificed both wealth and assured social position which such a wife would have brought as dowry. And she realized, should Kenneth's ardor once begin to cool, that he would inevitably recognize this sacrifice.

Well — she was going to make up to Kenneth in some other form for the wealth and the social position she had not brought him. She was more than going to make up for it! — and she was going to do it quickly! Kenneth should never have a chance to regret!

Theirs had been an unusual honeymoon, considering their great resources for leisure and luxurious journeying. When the time of the marriage had been decided on, Kenneth had begun to suggest alluring retreats for their bridal seclusion; but Jennie had said that she preferred to stay right there at Silver Bluffs, provided, of course, his mother was willing. Kenneth had demurred, and then had yielded. Since she wished it thus, the arrangement secretly pleased him. Business America was in a turmoil consequent upon the vast furnishing of supplies to the Allies: there were great contracts to be let — commissions — the building of new factories, and the remodeling of old ones, for munition making — the wild jumps in war stocks — limitless speculation — great fortunes made in a week — some wiped out in a day. In view of his many interests, Kenneth considered it fortunate that he was placed where he could act upon the instant.

The days of her engagement and her honeymoon Jennie spent in unostentatiously working at her unannounced plan to become a brilliantly successful wife. The work was tedious and tiresome at times, since it dealt with fundamentals which would render her competent, but which in themselves would never be scintillant — perhaps they might even be taken for granted and never be noticed at all. But she never wavered in her plan, and at the same time she never let it interfere with Kenneth's being constantly with her when he was at home. While he was away she went to school to Mrs. Harrison, who was her delighted teacher. She studied Mrs. Harrison's method of managing servants; Mrs. Harrison, thoughtful and considerate and yet never relaxing her pleasant authority, had rendered non-existent the servant problem in her household. Jennie studied buying, and all the details of household management; and most important of all, from the standpoint of its direct influence upon Kenneth, she was constantly with Mrs. Harrison and her housekeeper when they were planning and arranging for week-end parties and other social affairs. In brief, Jennie took a concentrated course in domestic science — domestic science, that is, as it pertains to the households of the rich.

And this was not all. The decorating and furnishing of the Park Avenue apartment had been placed in the hands of a well-known woman interior decorator. Jennie came to a business understanding with Miss Howard, involving the private payment of a special professional fee; and as often as she could get away from Silver Bluffs she was in the city with Miss Howard. She was told about materials and their art significance, and she was inducted into the mysteries of color

relationships; and also she was told in detail about the furniture as it came in. In the end her knowledge was neither wide nor deep; but nevertheless, she knew more about how to keep her home in good taste, and to make it seem even distinguished to the critical and cultured guest, than do ninety-nine per cent of young brides whom the marriage vow makes mistresses of pretentious establishments.

All this was the hardest kind of routine work; nothing could have been in itself less spectacular. But she never lost her energy, and never showed lack of spirit or freshness before Kenneth. What kept her going was the belief that she was building solidly for the future; that though the preparations were difficult and obscure, the structure was to be glorious.

She had some reward for her period of surreptitious labor when the last guest had gone after the ordeal of their first dinner-party in the new apartment.

"I say, Jennie, you were simply splendid!" cried Kenneth, with an excitement unusual in him, taking her in his arms. "Why, mother at forty-five never ran off a dinner more smoothly — and this is your first dinner and you're hardly twenty-one. And the way you kept things going! — everybody interested in each other, I mean. I say, where did you get on to such a lot of things?"

She laughed. "Oh, I was born with one of those Universal Compendiums of Drawing-Room Manners and Dinner-Party Conversation in my mouth."

He ignored her banter; after all, he was primarily interested not in where and how she had learned how to do it, but in the fact that she could do it. "You were simply *splendid!*" he repeated. "I had no idea you

would be able to handle things so well at the very start. Why," he went on enthusiastically, "with your being so clever, there's no reason why we should n't get right into the biggest sort of things. Jennie, I can't tell you how proud I am of you!"

He kissed her. Jennie sensed that his infatuation for her was just as high as when on that afternoon down on the end of the stone pier at Silver Bluffs he had proposed to her.

Yes, this was reward for her patient, surreptitious labor — this was triumph. But this was little, indeed, compared to the triumphs that would result from yet further plans which but recently had been taking more definite shape.

Since her marriage, and more concretely during the weeks since they had actively entered the social life of New York, the alert brain of Jennie, which permitted no values to escape it and not even slight differentiations of value, had perceived that though the social position of the Harrisons was undeniably lofty — lofty even beyond her possible attainment, it once had seemed to her — yet above the Harrisons there was a stratum or two of the especially elect. Even the popular Kenneth, though when a bachelor admitted to these strata, did not really belong. And she had so far penetrated the exterior of smiling nonchalance of her husband to know that one of his ambitions was to be a recognized citizen of this highest realm.

Well — somehow she was going to win her way to a place among the loftiest of the elect. How she was going to do it she did not yet know; but she was going to do it — she was sure of that! And she was going to do it quickly. And in going to the very top she was going to



carry Kenneth with her. This was to be another thing she was going to do for him. No — Kenneth was never going to have reason for once thinking of what another girl might have brought him.

And at about this time her general campaign developed yet another major operation. Now that her relationship with Kenneth was more intimate, she began to detect in him signs of dissatisfaction. They were little things, what she saw — but they might have a great meaning. She wondered what that meaning might be. Was he, after all, beginning thus early to be dissatisfied with her? She studied the signs, she tried him with deft questions — but the mystery remained a mystery, and grew, and a suspense which had crept into her grew with it.

And then this mystery was discovered to her in its full and sharply defined outlines after a Belgian Relief Ball: — this was the period when society had just begun its flurry of dancing pleasantly for the benefit of foreign widows and orphans. At this ball Jennie had danced twice with a square-shouldered, square-chinned man whose name she had merely caught as Shipman and whose chief impression on Jennie at the time had been of a remarkable vigor for a man of his obvious middle years. On the homeward ride Kenneth's mind was turned inward and he hardly spoke, but during the brief period in which they usually relaxed in front of the open fire before going to bed, he emerged from his absorbed brooding and abruptly asked:

"What did Shipman say while you were dancing with him?"

"Nothing that I remember," she answered carelessly.

"What did you say to him?"

"The usual dance talk — I really don't remember."

She covered a little yawn.

The careless matter-of-factness with which she regarded his inquiries caused him to lean sharply forward and stare. "Do you mean to say that you did n't know whom you were dancing with?"

"Only that he was Mr. Shipman."

"Only Mr. Shipman!" Kenneth exclaimed incredulously. "Well, your 'only Mr. Shipman' is Daniel Shipman, the real head of Phillips, Everson and Company — the biggest bankers in America. And Phillips, Everson and Company are handling practically all the loans the Allies are trying to float in this country — and they are the chief purchasing agents of the Allies in America. And Daniel Shipman is really the firm. He's only just about everybody — that's all that Daniel Shipman is!"

"Why, Kenneth," she breathed, "I had no idea he was such a great man!"

He ignored her remark — perhaps he did not really hear it. The flood of excited words about Shipman broke down the invisible dam of insouciant reserve he had builded to hold back his soul, and what he had been silently brooding upon this last half-hour rushed past his lips.

"Why, if in some way I could get into Shipman's crowd, especially in these times, there'd be nothing too big for me to hope for!"

It was Jennie's turn to stare. "Kenneth — why — why — I thought you and your father were doing wonderful business!"

"We are!" he exclaimed impatiently. He was not so much speaking to her as giving freedom to his secret thoughts. "But we're in the construction business.

That's all right in its way. But even if a man works his head off, and reaches the top, reaches the very limits of the possibilities in the business, why, even then he's only a big man in the second or third rank of business men. By no chance can he become one of the big men of the first rank of big men. The financial game is the only game in which a man has a chance to do that. God! if somehow I could only get connected up with Shipman — then I'd show you all!"

He was now striding excitedly up and down in front of the great Italianesque fireplace, with its bed of glowing hickory embers — and for the moment Jennie was almost forgotten. She gazed at him in amazement. What he had said about the limitations of Harrison and Company was entirely new to her, though doubtless it was true, and this sudden revelation of the man who lived within her husband was even more amazing. Why, he was the very passion of ambition — which perceived no place of rest or contentment lower than the crest of the topmost peak. Kenneth saw her look, and it caused him to check his excited pacing. He smiled and laughed lightly; but both smile and laugh were forced.

"I guess my tongue must have gone out of its mind," he said. "Be good, Jennie, and forget my chatter; even wise people run off the track sometimes and talk nonsense." And then he dismissed the matter casually with: "It's half-past two — time country people like us were getting to bed."

She replied with an equally casual remark; but she knew that the real soul — or part of it — of her husband had been laid bare to her. Alone in her bedroom — they had separate sleeping-rooms — she lay reconsidering and readjusting her great plans. She was going

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to get Kenneth connected with Mr. Shipman! How she did not then consider — but she could find a way. She had achieved many things that, viewed from the standpoint of a few years back, would have seemed impossible; and now in her youthful confidence nothing seemed beyond her.

No, of a certainty, Kenneth would never have cause for regret!

## CHAPTER XXVII

### JENNIE CONSOLIDATES HER GAINS

**I**T is doubtful if Jennie, in any other American epoch, could have achieved with such rapidity the social success she was to win that winter. Her young life was launched into a period and a condition without a parallel — that period of hectic activity in both social affairs and in business, which will forever remain one of the remarkable phases in the history of America's connection with the Great War. The social and the financial speculator were sweeping upward on the wave of golden promise. America had not yet awakened to her moral responsibilities and her stakes in the war, as she later was to do. To be sure, some few of the younger Americans were driving ambulances behind the lines in France, a few were begging to be fighters in the air, and a few were enlisted with the French, English, and Canadian forces. But on the whole, the war was still regarded as none of America's affair — except to the extent that, as a business proposition, we tried to supply war's business needs, and except as its victims were appealing subjects for our charity. Otherwise, we were more diligent in business, and the easy dollar piled up more rapidly, than in the memory of living man — and dance orchestras and caterers never before so nearly approached millionairessdom and nervous prostration.

Society, while it had not as yet adopted relief of European war victims as the sole purpose of its functions, was giving an increasing proportion of its more pretentious affairs in the name of stricken Europe. The re-



sult of this was that society had to go outside its very select and limited numbers to secure assistance; men and women, particularly women, had to be enlisted who had the willingness to undertake tasks and the tenacity to see them through, and who, moreover, had initiative and ideas. To an extent, the barriers were lowered; the first and second cousins of society were admitted, and even outsiders; and in this enlarged group, where efficient activity was in such demand, the person who could do things was the person who won attention and who advanced.

This is not primarily a history of Jennie's social achievements. Therefore this history cannot concern itself with the many details of Jennie's rise during that winter; nor can it concern itself with each of the many figures of her great world whom she was now meeting daily and with whom this phase of her life was intricately involved. Given the chance, Jennie was bound to rise — and Jennie had the chance. She could dance, she could sing, she could manage booths, she had a ready mind which enabled her to meet those unexpected situations which are always arising — and despite her willingness she seemed personally unaggressive, always good-humored, always reliable, always patient. She began to be regarded as a "find."

Among those who led in society, Jennie particularly was aware of the eminence of Mrs. Shipman, the wife of the banker, and particularly did she set about to gain that lady's recognition. Two or three times Mrs. Shipman spoke pleasantly if briefly to her. But the first sign of success was that lady's asking her to be a figure in one of the tableaux in the War Bazaar she was giving in a few weeks. To be sure, the figure suggested to her was

not important — but she was getting on! She met Mr. Shipman occasionally at balls and at dinners; and not again did she carelessly throw away her opportunities as she had done at their first meeting. She studied him, and studied to please him. She decided to be good-naturedly, girlishly serious with him; and she knew she acted the part well. She thought he was beginning to like her — a little, at any rate. She was getting on there, too! — if only in the preliminary stages.

By the middle of that winter, people began to talk about “those young Harrisons,” and particularly about “that pretty, clever, and unspoiled Mrs. Harrison.” In speaking of her some of the discerning older women compared her to this or that highly important woman who had first appeared on society’s fringes as an obscure figure from the outland. Mark their word, this young Mrs. Harrison was some day also going to be an important person.

Jennie was exultant chiefly on Kenneth’s account: because of the bearing success had had upon her relationship with him. She knew that he was pleased, though only occasionally did he speak freely and fully of what she was achieving. But if Kenneth did not give full acknowledgment, his mother did. One evening when she and Kenneth had had family dinner at the house in the East Seventies, the older woman, up in her sitting-room, had exclaimed, her blue eyes warm with enthusiasm and affection:

“Jennie, I believed you were going to make a remarkable wife for Kenneth — but you’ve been even more remarkable than I dreamed. Oh, I’ve been watching you closely, my dear — every mother is a born spy. You manage your house amazingly well for so young a

wife — and a home he can be proud of will always be effective with Kenneth. And the way you are getting on in society! I don't care a great deal for society myself — but I know, for all his indifference, it means a great deal to Kenneth. Just as I thought you would, you are proving to be exactly the right wife for him." And then she added reminiscently: "I might possibly once have become somebody in society if I had cared — but I never could possibly have become what you are going to become. Never, my dear!"

"I'm sore at her," grumbled Sue, who soon was to become Mrs. William Grayson. "Nobody pays any attention to me at all when Jennie is in the same hemisphere." The warm hug with which Sue ended this complaint was proof that jealousy did not exist in Sue's generous nature.

"I'm more sure than ever, Jennie," Mrs. Harrison declared, "that you are going to make a fine big man out of Kenneth — and help him to the sort of success his heart desires!"

Jennie glowed at the praise and affection of these two sincere women. She had long since discounted the deception which had been practiced, so she now felt no twinges of guilt. Whatever might have been in the long ago, she now was trying to build solidly; she was trying to do her very best for Kenneth; and the words of Kenneth's mother and sister were the highest recognition that her achievements were solid and of a truly helpful character.

During this swift-mounting period there was so much in Jennie's life that its single events lost their identity in a blurred but glorious whole. But there was one incident — rather, a few scenes — which did remain in her

mind. This was on the occasion of the first time, since that night at Silver Bluffs, that she had seen Kenneth and Slim Jackson in the same company. Slim was not a member of the original party — a little supper dance at Sherry's — but at midnight Jennie noted that he was present: debonair, gracefully at ease as always, and welcomed too. A little later, apart from the milling of the dance, she saw Kenneth with an arm on Slim's shoulder, talking with intimate earnestness.

Presently she was dancing with Slim. "I saw you talking to Kenneth just as though you were old friends," she whispered. "What does it mean?"

There was an amused, provoking smile in his gray eyes. "Oh, Kenneth and I are better friends than ever — did n't you know?" Then he added, in a guarded voice, "This part of it also has worked out exactly as I told you it would that night last summer. I said to you then that though Kenneth hated me at the time, after a while he'd come to realize that I'd really done him a great service. He has n't said this in so many words, but that's exactly the way he feels. So I'm ace-high with Kenneth, and we're back together on those business stunts I once mentioned to you, and one or two besides."

His lean face was smiling, triumphant — teasing. At this particular moment she felt no personal fear of him as she had done before; but she did catch her breath a bit at his astute power, and at the exactitude with which his plans came to pass.

"And the other things you said were going to come about, the things you did n't want to specify — have they happened too?" she whispered.

"Some of them — but not all," he replied, a bit mys-

teriously. "All are not due to happen yet — the time's not come — but all will happen." He bent closer to her ear, and whispered admiringly. "But one thing has happened even bigger than I thought, Jen — and that's you. The way you've put yourself across is simply a marvel!" He chuckled. "We've sure come along a bit, Jennie — you and I. God! if Black Jerry and the old bunch down at the Pekin could only see us now!"

She did not answer. When the music ceased, there at her shoulder stood Gloria, who must have entered during the dance; and Gloria was looking directly at her. This was also the first time she had seen Gloria since that historic night at Silver Bluffs. Jennie looked back at Gloria, remembering Gloria's threat and wondering what Gloria was going to do. The pause while their looks held was only for a moment; then Gloria said in as friendly a voice as she ever used:

"Hello, Jennie. Been out of town for several months — Adirondacks — Asheville — Florida — and this is the first chance I've had to congratulate you — face to face. Never write letters, you know. But I do congratulate you. And I hear that of the new wives of the season, you're getting all the blue ribbons. So I congratulate you again."

"Thank you." If Gloria was easy and self-possessed, Jennie was no less so.

"By the way, Jennie, I've been asked by Mrs. Shipman to put on a little act at the bazaar she's giving. I wish you'd join in and help me."

"I can't, Gloria. I have already promised to help her in something else."

"That's good. Then we'll be seeing each other just the same."



They chatted on about inconsequent matters for a few moments, Gloria as striking a figure, in her bold fashion, as in other days. Slim stood beside them with a sober but satirical face. And all this brief while Jennie was studying her old antagonist, and wondering what was behind her manner of good fellowship. This much she knew — that Gloria, when she could control her temper and suppress her ego (which occasionally she did), had a fair portion of what the sophisticated world considers good sense and was a moderately good actress; and Jennie also knew Gloria realized that their worlds were now the same and that Jennie could no longer be snubbed or patronized. So much Jennie knew; beyond that she could only guess.

While they chatted Kenneth came up. Gloria congratulated him on his marriage just as though there had never been anything between them. Kenneth, after an instant of stiffness, responded politely.

The music started up. Without a word Slim swept Jennie away, and she saw Kenneth and Gloria fall into step. After a moment Slim chuckled softly in Jennie's ear.

"That was a fine piece of drawing-room comedy acting between you two young dames."

"I was n't acting," returned Jennie.

"No?" There was irony in Slim's soft laugh. "Well, if you were not, Gloria was. And listen to an old playmate, Jen: Gloria will smile just like that and talk just like that, so long as you are on top. You're too much of a hit for her not to be nice to you. But that darling child has n't forgotten a thing — and she carries a gun in her kick — and she's just waiting for her chance. So look out, my dear!"

Abruptly, teasingly — there was always something of the imp in Slim — he changed the subject. "Look over there at Gloria and Kenneth. They do make a fine-looking couple, yes? Do you wonder at it if, beneath it all, Gloria should be a bit sore?"

Jennie looked. She had to admit that Gloria and Kenneth were a striking pair. And it did seem to her that Kenneth was just a little less formal than the circumstances should have made him. But she made no reply to Slim's comment.

In their car on the ride home Kenneth brought up the subject of that evening's meetings. "Funny, was n't it, our running into Gloria Raymond and Jackson Holt." And then he added apologetically: "I can't very well be sore at Jackson Holt over that night last summer, since what he did has turned out to be a favor. And Gloria — since we've got to be meeting her we might as well be polite, particularly when the fight is over and has come out our way."

"Of course," agreed Jennie.

But she spoke absently. Just then her mind was filled with Slim Jackson's half-jesting words of warning about Gloria; and also — was it the germ of jealousy on her part? — with Slim's remark about Gloria and Kenneth being a fine-looking couple.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF

JENNIE'S big chance came sooner than she expected, and in a way she did not expect — and it came with unexpected complications and undreamed-of risks; yet she was ready for it when it did come.

When the participants in Mrs. Shipman's coming bazaar began to meet in that lady's big house on upper Fifth Avenue, first to talk things over and then to rehearse, Jennie had opportunity for intensive study of the woman whom it was part of her great plan to win. Since the passing of that older order of grand dames who, a decade or two before, had truly ruled society with imperial might and hauteur, Mrs. Shipman more nearly approached being the leader of society than any of her contemporaries. She was more tactful, more considerate of others, than had been the great ladies of her own young womanhood. Jennie perceived that she ruled more by the good-will of her subjects than by the imposition of her might; in keeping with the political trend of her time, she was more of a democratic queen. But though her methods were different, Jennie sensed that her desire for dominance was no less than in the leaders of old. And to maintain her leadership she had to be always active, and every affair with which she was concerned had to be at least a success, if it did not actually stand above every similar enterprise. She dared not fail; at least she dared not fail often.

And yet, for all her adroit democratic imperialism,

for all her pleasantly hidden determination to hold her own, Jennie perceived that she was at bottom a good-hearted and generous woman — perfectly willing, so long as the main glory was hers, to give full credit to others.

Jennie, studying quietly, decided on the traits of Mrs. Shipman which offered her her best chance to win: the older woman's desire for success and continued success, and her willingness to render credit. These traits Jennie must use.

Mrs. Shipman had decided upon a programme of emotional and dramatic tableaux — the "Woes of the Allies" — the figures of which were to be portrayed by the younger women of society. And since she really liked a certain young Percy Farwell, and everybody thought him extremely clever, she had decided to close her programme with a one-act musical comedy written and composed by him, and played by amateurs. This would lighten the end of the programme and prepare the guests for the dancing which was to follow, and also put them in the right mood to buy freely at the booths which were to be the real source of revenue. All together it would be a well-rounded entertainment. And her printed programmes would give only the bare titles of the various numbers, thus creating expectancy and speculation as to what each number was to be and as to the identity of the performers.

Jennie's allotted part in the programme was a comparatively minor one: merely a figure in a tableau that was to be called "Daughters of Belgium" — though after the tableau had been rehearsed many times she became the stricken daughter around whom the others were grouped. But in the bustle of preparation she paid

more attention to young Farwell's operetta than she did to her own act. Gloria, with that swift, possessive instinct which few ever combated, had seized upon Percy Farwell's work even while Mrs. Shipman's plans were forming; she gave time to it, she privately spent her own money, she got the prettiest girls who were not otherwise engaged for her chorus, and she secured Slim Jackson as coach. Of course Gloria had the chief feminine part, with Percy Farwell himself playing the romantic lover. It really looked very good to Jennie in rehearsal, with Slim whipping it into shape. Gloria had enough assurance to be a fair actress, and she had a fair voice — altogether quite adequate for an amateur performance. Gloria plainly intended to register the personal success of the evening, and she would undoubtedly do so, for she had the superior vehicle.

Jennie could not wholly repress bitter feelings. But then, — oh, well, let Gloria have her success! Some day, somehow, her own great time would come.

At length the night of Mrs. Shipman's bazaar arrived. The affair was held in the big ballroom at Sherry's, the ballroom in her Fifth Avenue house being altogether too small; for Mrs. Shipman was bent on making money, and tickets had been sold widely and somewhat indiscriminately in order to insure a large crowd. A temporary stage had been erected at one end of the room, with draw-curtains, and with curtained-in dressing-rooms for the participants.

From the standpoint of attracting an audience the bazaar was a success from the outset. Every one of the gilded chairs was occupied and men stood packed to the very walls. Peeping between the curtains just before they parted for the beginning of the performance,



Jennie had two sharp surprises. Standing near the door, rather uncomfortable in evening clothes, stood Officer Casey. She caught her breath. What was he doing there? Then she relaxed partially; this was a mixed crowd, and police protection had seemed advisable — that was probably the explanation of Casey's presence.

And then her eyes lighted on another man, a man with a luminous bald head, and she experienced a more severe shock. He seemed familiar, and yet at first she could not place him. Then suddenly she remembered. He was that judge before whom she had been tried in the Women's Night Court years before. She recalled how piercing his eyes had been, how merciless they had seemed.

She had a frantic impulse to tell Mrs. Shipman that she was suddenly indisposed and could not appear. But that impulse she quickly controlled. In the plain black costume which she wore as one of the daughters of Belgium she looked very little like her real self; and besides, so many years had passed that the judge had probably forgotten the incident of the young girl forger who had been before him and had that same night disappeared.

The programme moved along smoothly. The tableaux had been well thought out, and carefully rehearsed, and since they had the added value of being presented by the prettiest of young society women, they were well received. The last of the tableaux was Jennie's — a group of young women all in black, representing the girlhood of a devastated land, faces white and fixed with terror, and arms stretched out imploringly. When the curtains swung together, there was continued applause. Not a tumult, but quite as much as Jennie had expected.

Jennie saw that Mrs. Shipman, sitting in the improvised wings, was thoroughly satisfied. Thus far all had gone as well as she had counted. It was to be Percy Farwell's little opera that was to give distinction to her programme, which was to make her evening stand out above the affairs conducted by other women.

Jennie paused near Mrs. Shipman to watch the performance. Slim Jackson had hurried over from his theater where the last curtain had fallen a few minutes before, and was giving final direction to Gloria and Farwell. Beyond the velvet curtains a small orchestra, recruited from the musicians at Slim's theater, were beginning the brief overture. A minute or two later and the curtain parted, and the chorus danced on.

The plots of all musical comedies, in their outlines, are much the same and seem unbelievably stupid, and Percy Farwell's broke with no traditions. The chorus seemed to be friends of the heroine, though naturally it was not made clear what they were doing on the premises. They sang their appointed melody, and sang it well, then danced off. Immediately thereafter Gloria and young Farwell appeared on the stage.

The dialogue acquainted the audience with the facts that the stage was Gloria's drawing-room and that Gloria was a young widow whose fortune had been tied up in a way to prevent her remarrying, by one of those wills which dead husbands are forever leaving behind them in musical comedies. Also this will had attached to her for life a maid and a butler — spies upon her happiness — both spies! But fortunately, by a trick, she had got the pair out of the house, and for once she and her lover could talk freely. Whereupon the young hero nobly declared that he did not love her for her fortune,

only for herself; and besought her to forfeit her fortune and join him in penniless happiness. There was much romantic talk about this — and he sang to her, in a pleasing light baritone, about the spell of her wonderful eyes — and she sang back (a very neat melody) in a passable soprano something about if only one dwelt in love's kingdom where Cupid made all the laws. This cooing at each other done with, she proceeded to declare that she could come to no man and be to him merely a burden — there must be some way out of the will.

Thus far all had gone excellently. Absurd as the foregoing synopsis may seem, Farwell's lines had been clever or agreeably sentimental, the music had always been adequate and in spots highly pleasing, and the audience had been in a most cordial mood. At this point in the dialogue, Gloria was supposed to have an inspired plan. But at this point Gloria had nothing at all. She began to flounder in her lines — then she lost them altogether. Young Farwell began to talk rapidly, improvising, slipping her her cue repeatedly in his discursive speech. From the wings Slim whispered her lines loud enough for her to hear. But she heard nothing. For once her self-possession failed her. She stared wildly at Farwell for a moment, then she fairly ran off into the wings. No other course was left to Farwell except to follow her, leaving an audience that blinked its eyes at an empty stage.

Slim Jackson swore one of those oaths such as he had used in the long ago down in the Pekin, but such as he had never before permitted himself in such company as this. "Draw those curtains!" he snapped.

Jennie's attention during these moments was on Mrs. Shipman. She sat in her chair, stricken with the sudden-

ness of the disaster, as the curtains swished together. "My heavens! My heavens!" gasped the great lady. And then her magnificent eyes suddenly blazed at Gloria. "You — you —" she choked. But Gloria, trembling, yet at the same time defiant, walked by without answer into her dressing-room.

Beyond the curtains was that dead hush which is more sickening to the soul of performers and managers than hisses and cat-calls can ever be. Jennie saw that Mrs. Shipman, though slumped down in her chair, had grown tense with the realization that this failure was so utterly complete as to negative the pleasant effects of the preceding numbers — to make of all that had gone before, and all that was to come after, the ball, the piratical but charming business of the booths, a hollow and dismal ruin. And for the great Mrs. Shipman to fail in public and fail so colossally! — Jennie could guess the agonizing thoughts which were horrifying that appalled and stricken lady.

Less than a minute had passed since Slim had ordered the curtains to be drawn. Jennie's mind worked so swiftly that she can hardly be said to have thought at all. Back of the operations of her mind, though not then consciously remembered, was her acquaintance with the old stage fact, acquired from going to all sorts of theaters from the Bowery to Broadway in her Pekin days, that a thing which is pretentious and a failure needs only to be exaggerated and made consciously and solemnly bad in order to become effective with an audience.

She excitedly caught Slim's arm. "Come on — let's go on and burlesque it!"

"What's in your head, Jen?" was Slim's quick, whispered question.

"I'll be Nannette, the maid — you'll be Thompson, the butler," she answered rapidly. "We're the servants, just come back, and we play exactly the same scenes as our masters — only we burlesque it — making it as broad as the old Bowery things. We remember some of the lines, and we can fake the rest. It's the only way to save this. Come on!"

Slim's eyes were gleaming with excitement. "Jennie, you're all there! Sure — come on!"

Jennie caught up a tiny apron which had been used in an earlier tableau, swiftly tied it on — and in her severe black dress which she had worn as a mourning daughter of Belgium, she was transformed into the most desirable of maids. She hurried on to the stage, Slim behind her, Slim at the same time ordering the curtains drawn. When the curtains parted the still dazed audience beheld Jennie, sitting in the same attitude Gloria had assumed shortly after her entrance, fanning herself affectedly with the fan Gloria had dropped. Slim was posed adoringly over her chair.

"Thompson," said Jennie, looking up at him, "I hope your days of being a butler will soon be over. It is fortunate that my mistress is away so that we can at last talk things over freely."

"Nannette," cried Slim, with hoarse emotion, "this chance has been my dream for months!"

This bit told the audience who they were. At once Jennie spoke of the horrid will her late husband had made, and within half a minute the audience grasped the fact that they were witnessing the same scene they had just beheld, only now it was being played by the servants, and being played as a joke. They began to titter. Jennie and Slim went on about the will, in high-



flown language, with grandiose emotion, with melodramatic gesture, with an occasional "My God! My God!" and an occasional frantic hand in the hair.

They used in their improvisation all the stock phrases and the well-known cues their minds could seize upon. The audience was now in full laughter. At length they reached the point where Farwell and Gloria had sung at each other. Slim could do many things, but he could not sing. However, he was ready with words which should lead up to Jennie's singing — and these words he made a burlesque upon that most wearisome of theatrical devices, the "song cue."

"Ah, your face, dear — your face!" he cried in high ecstasy. "That reminds me of a song you used to sing about a face — a sweet and simple song that was the tender speech of the heart. Come, sing it again!"

He led the way to the piano and seated himself. Jennie had no idea what he was going to play, but she was ready for anything — or thought she was. But when Slim, after a few preliminary chords, struck into a melody which he played very slowly, and when she recognized what the song was, her courage almost left her. She glanced at the judge; could that song send his mind back, and possibly connect her in his memory with the missing Jennie Malone he once had tried?

Slim had twice played the introduction before she had recovered herself. Then she stepped forward, clasped her hands, raised her eyes toward heaven, and slowly, pathetically, she sang a Bowery ballad which had been familiar to her as a child — "The Face on the Bar-Room Floor." The combination of her charming, plaintive figure, the grisly pathos of the words, and this being Mrs. Shipman's most ambitious social function — the

incongruity of it all tripled the effect. The audience simply roared its delight when the song was finished, and split gloves and bruised palms in its demand for more.

Slim's nod informed them that there was to be an encore. He played chords for a few moments until there was comparative silence, and then he spoke again in his previous voice of exaggerated emotion:

"That face — that face! Another song you used to sing about a face! Dear mother's face it was. A sweet and simple song that was the tender speech of the heart. Come, sing it again!"

Once more, while Slim played aimless chords, Jennie wondered what was coming. And once more she was horror-stricken when he switched into the melody. But once more she clasped her hands, raised her eyes, and slowly, pathetically, holding long upon notes which she could make dolorous, she sang another gem from her memory's collection of Bowery ballads — "Don't Drive a Nail in Mother's Face."

The applause which followed this was even more tumultuous. But Jennie was suddenly rather frightened. Perhaps Mrs. Shipman's bazaar was being saved, but, by throwing herself into the breach, had she not endangered her own standing — her prestige — with those people among whom she was determined to win a greater place?

While the applause was still thundering, she whispered rapidly to Slim:

"I don't want the final impression these people have of me to be rough-house. Let's switch into something different — say end off with a dance."

Slim closed the piano in a manner to indicate that a

change was coming, shot a few low words to the conductor of his orchestra, and the orchestra immediately began softly to play a modern waltz. At once their manner of burlesque fell from Jennie and Slim, he slipped an arm about her and they swung away into the dance. All New York declared that Jackson Holt was the greatest of all male dancers who specialized in the ballroom dances; and in the whole of his life Slim Jackson had never danced better for money than he now danced for nothing. And Jennie, trying to superimpose upon the burlesque impression an impression of herself that would be more graciously remembered, danced the best that was in her. Into the slow grace of the old-time waltz they interwove the intricate steps of the waltz of their own day. They were a well-nigh perfect pair. There was silence out in the audience where before there had been unrestrained hilarity — until they swung off the stage and the curtains drew together. Then there was applause that out-thundered the previous thunder.

Jennie and Slim acknowledged this by slipping through the curtains and bowing to the audience and then to each other. But the applause did not diminish when they were again back through the curtains.

“You take this call alone, Jennie,” Slim said. “It’s really your crowd, not mine — the crowd you want to get solid with.”

Jennie’s excitement was too high for her to notice the sensation which had been created in the wings; but she did see Percy Farwell standing with loose, bewildered face fixed on her and Slim. She seized his limp hand, and before he knew what she was doing he was through the curtains with her, blinking at the audience, and she was saying:

"Mr. Farwell wishes me to tell you how grateful he is to you for your appreciation of his burlesque. All of us who had a part in it think his idea was extremely clever — to embody in the same play an apparently serious scene and then a burlesque upon it. In behalf of all of us who have had a share in Mr. Farwell's burlesque, I wish to thank you."

Even when she had drawn him back to safety behind the curtains, the dazed Mr. Farwell was still inarticulate. Every one else, however, crowding up, had much to say. But the showman that was in Slim Jackson dominated them all.

"Hear that audience out there? They're not satisfied yet, and are n't going to be satisfied with mere bows before the curtain. Mrs. Harrison is the one they're most interested in. Mrs. Harrison, can you give them an encore?"

Jennie was quite willing to be the star, and more than willing that the effect of her burlesque performance should be indubitably superseded by another impression. So she said, "Yes."

"Clear the stage, everybody," ordered Slim, and when all were off he ordered the curtains once more drawn. "Now, go to it, Jennie," he whispered — "anything you like."

Jennie walked out upon the stage, opened the piano, and very simply she seated herself — much in the manner that one Galli-Curci was to win her most popular triumphs a year or so later. Then slowly, softly, she sang, "The Last Rose of Summer." The utter simplicity and charm with which she did the old song, by its contrast with what she had been doing these last few minutes, kept the audience hushed until after she had risen

and the curtains were swinging together. Then the applause rose again — and now it was not that of those who have been made to laugh, but those who have been made to admire. Two — three — half a dozen times Jennie had to step between the curtains and bow. She smilingly shook her head with finality at the clamor for more and did not take another call. She had gained her effect. That was enough.

“Swell, Jennie — simply swell!” Slim whispered into her ear.

But the first great reward for what she had done came when Mrs. Shipman, her face now glowing, and tears in her eyes, took Jennie into her arms. “My dear, you’ve simply saved me!” cried that great lady. “You’ve saved me personally — and you’ve prevented the bazaar from being a financial failure. The people are ready to buy anything. And, my dear, if there is anything in the world I can do for you — it’s already done! Won’t you please lunch with me to-morrow?”

Jennie promised, and exultantly escaped through the performers toward her dressing-room. On the way she met Gloria, in a cloak, a dark look upon her face. Jennie could not refrain from saying:

“What, leaving just as the dancing is about to begin! Where are you going?”

“Home — if that’s any of your business!” snapped Gloria.

Changed into an evening gown and out among those who had so lately been her audience, Jennie was a more direct target for praise. It all sounded sweet to her; it was the crowd’s acclaim which meant that she was getting on. She did not miss a word of it, although her ears were expert enough also to hear Percy Farwell



being clamorously told that his burlesque was the best thing he had ever done. A glance in his direction showed her that he was red-faced and embarrassed and thoroughly at a loss how to take his success.

A little later when the current of humanity had carried her to near the main entrance, some one at her side said, "Mrs. Harrison, I want the pleasure of presenting to you Judge Gilbert."

She turned. Facing her was the luminous-domed magistrate who had tried her those long years ago. In the instant that followed there was one of those periods — there had been several such in Jennie's life — in which a moment seems to have the length of hours. Did he recognize her? Was she in her moment of high victory about to go down into abysmal defeat? . . . A few yards away her quick eyes saw the uncomfortable Casey. Was Casey there to act? . . .

The suspense was for but a moment. Then she heard the judge who on that other occasion had been so brusque with her, saying:

"This is a pleasure — a privilege — I assure you, Mrs. Harrison."

His voice and manner were cringing. He did not know her! She had passed upward into a realm toward which he gazed with reverent eyes.

Very calmly she gave him her hand to touch, and the meeting was over. But her fate having been tested thus far, she wished to test it yet a little further. So she walked toward Casey, and as she was passing him she looked straight into his face. His eyes met hers; they were blank, unrecognizing.

She dropped her handkerchief, as if by accident, at his feet. As he bent to pick it up, she leaned toward him.

"Well?" she whispered.

He struck the handkerchief two or three times against his sleeve as if to beat out any possible dust. His head was bent over his task, and for that moment their heads were close together.

"You're putting it over grand, Jennie," he replied in the most guarded of whispers.

He handed her the bit of linen with an awkward bow. Again his eyes met hers, and again they were blank, unrecognizing.

And yet a little later Jennie had her second great reward. This was when she was dancing with Mr. Daniel Shipman — or rather when she was not dancing with him, for he had said he preferred to sit out the number he had won from her.

"Mrs. Harrison," the great financier said to her quizzically, "I wonder if you realize what a tremendous fraud you are? No, I don't mean tremendous — I mean just a pleasant-sized fraud."

"Fraud?" exclaimed Jennie, startled.

"Yes, fraud. Mrs. Shipman has told me privately that you have deceived us all abominably. That is, she told me the truth about that play: that you turned it into a burlesque in order to save the evening — and then gave young Farwell the credit for having written it that way in order to save everybody else. Is that correct?"

"If Mrs. Shipman said that I can't deny it. But please don't tell any one."

"Pardon my being personal, Mrs. Harrison," the great financier went on — and Jennie thought she saw a gleam in his keen eyes that was very personal indeed — "but a woman who can do what you have done must

have quickness of wit and nerve and brains. She must be a woman very much out of the ordinary — the kind of woman any man would count it a high favor to have as one of his friends." His voice became abrupt. "Mrs. Harrison, I would like to know you better — have real talks with you. Could n't you — ah — we have lunch or something together? Other persons, if you like, and all that. Or you might — ah — like to see my collection of emeralds. Your husband could call for you."

His invitations, or suggestions, had been vague. But to Jennie's mind there had been much, very much, implied by them. Jennie felt dizzy. She did not want complications with Mrs. Shipman, and perhaps injure her chances there. But here she was suddenly at the gate of new opportunities. And perhaps — of new dangers.

"Why — why, yes," she answered.

"Soon?" he asked.

"Yes — soon."

"That's a bargain." His keen eyes flashed again. "And I shall hold you to it — soon."

On the way home Jennie had to go over the whole business of the night with Kenneth.

"You were great, Jennie — nothing less than great!" Kenneth declared. "And Mrs. Shipman asking you to lunch with her — why, that's the surest sign that you have reached the very top!"

Jennie thought she had, too; and she had carried Kenneth up with her. She was no less exultant than Kenneth, but she was silent while he talked on excitedly. She was wondering if she should tell Kenneth about Mr. Shipman. She finally decided not to do so. She did not

know just what was going to happen when she met Mr. Shipman. Almost anything might happen — and then again perhaps nothing. Better to wait until she could say to Kenneth, "Here, this also I have won for you."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### HOW JENNIE MANAGED A GREAT MAN

THE luncheon at Mrs. Shipman's, which placed Jennie openly and definitely among the highest few, was an ever-memorable event for her. And the days that immediately followed that luncheon — the opening days of that golden epoch when she really "belonged" to society's topmost stratum — were days of unforgettable rapture. It was marvelous, dazzling, breath-taking, to be here, poised at the very top! But she managed up here, as for years past in lowlier places, to maintain an unpretentious manner. It seemed to her to be as bad a policy, even in these lofty realms, to excite jealousy or antagonism, as she had deemed it when she had been a crude young girl back in those far-gone first months at Braithewood Hall.

And Kenneth — daily he seemed to expand, and take on confidence, with their new social greatness. Busy as Jennie now was with social affairs, and thrilled as she was with her own exaltation, she had time and faculties enough to watch the effect of all this upon Kenneth. Of a certainty her great campaign had succeeded — thus far! Of a certainty Kenneth had no reason for regret!

At Mrs. Shipman's luncheon Jennie had seen an opening and had acted instantly. Mrs. Shipman had asked Jennie if there was not some way in which she could serve her. Jennie, daring greatly, had spoken of Kenneth's rare ability, his equipment for a financial career, and had then said that Mrs. Shipman could do her no higher service than use her influence to get Kenneth



into Mr. Shipman's firm. Mrs. Shipman had slowly shaken her head.

"I'm very sorry. I'm afraid I can't serve you in that. I do not interfere in Mr. Shipman's business affairs; especially not in the matter of recommending people to him—he's very particular about making his own choices and using his own judgment. Is n't there something else I can do, my dear?"

Jennie had felt sharp disappointment; but it had not lasted long, for this particular hope had flashed into existence only the minute before. After all, she had to reach Mr. Shipman through Mr. Shipman himself. Though her life was now bewilderingly crowded, how she should reach Mr. Shipman was her dominating thought. To gratify Kenneth's ambition by getting him connected with Mr. Shipman, that was now the remaining great objective in her dizzy upward climb.

A few days after her success at the bazaar, there came a note from Mr. Shipman stating that unfortunately his wife would be away, but asking Jennie to see his emeralds the next afternoon at four, hinting that there would be a chaperon upon the premises, and stating that her husband might call for her at any time after five. Jennie drove up to the Shipman house at the appointed hour, pulsing with wonderment over what was going to happen. She was doing a daring thing, she knew, for ugly rumors were whispered around concerning Mr. Shipman's relations with women — but one only got on by being daring, and she felt she could meet any situation that might arise. And of course she might avoid complications by writing Mrs. Shipman of her visit to see the emeralds.

She had no more than been admitted to the house when Mr. Shipman appeared and led her straight to the wing of the house where were the rooms containing his famous collections. Jennie's instant impression of his precious stone room was that it was very quiet and remote — and that there were no signs of a chaperon. For her life, she could not help shivering as the great man unlocked his cases. And as he picked up the precious bits of green fire for her better inspection, and put some of them into her own hand, talking all the while, she had, although she managed to keep up her end of the conversation, only one definite thought and that thought was, what was going to happen? Again and again he gave her direct looks from his keen, heavily lashed eyes; she thought he was about to switch to personal matters, but always he went on talking about the jewels. Presently he locked the last case, and they sat down in the formal chairs with which the room was furnished, and he began to talk to her about herself. She thought that at last it was coming — whatever it might be. She braced herself; she tried to recall some of the phrases she had prepared in Kenneth's favor.

But nothing came at all — nothing at all happened. Except that when Kenneth was announced as waiting, he took her hand in parting, his eyes gazing straight into her face, and said in lowered voice:

"This is only the beginning, Mrs. Harrison, I hope. May I not see you again — soon?"

"Why — yes," she answered nervously.

She was still dazed when she was out in the car with Kenneth. She could not understand Mr. Shipman. Well, perhaps these men of big affairs were just — well, just very different.

She had to tell Kenneth all about her hour with Mr. Shipman. Kenneth was silent a space.

"It's certain he likes you," said Kenneth. "They say Mr. Shipman's weakness is young and pretty women. They say that a pretty woman, if she is clever, can get almost anything out of him."

A week later Jennie and Kenneth were members of a large theater-party. In the crush in the lobby afterwards, when every one was talking to every one else, Jennie became separated from Kenneth and was borne onward by the slow current. At the door a hand slipped beneath her elbow, and a voice said in her ear:

"You're my prisoner. Come on."

She turned. "Mr. Shipman!" she cried.

"I've arranged for a little supper-party," he went on. "I've spoken to your husband. You and I are going to slip away to it together. My car is waiting down the line — out of this crush."

While he had spoken he had edged her along the outer wall of the theater where the crowd was thinnest, and almost before she knew what had happened she had been swiftly guided down the street and was with Mr. Shipman in a moving car. The suddenness of the episode had startled her so that it required the summoning of all her self-command to bear her part in the conversation Mr. Shipman started about the play. She did not even think about where they might be going, nor did she once look out. But when presently the car stopped and Mr. Shipman helped her out, she did have a fleeting impression that the street was unusually quiet to be the goal of a party of after-theater merry-makers. Mr. Shipman led her into a well-appointed hallway and thence into an elevator, to whose conductor he did not

say a word. Half a minute later they were out of the car and before a door. Mr. Shipman did not ring; instead he slipped a key into the lock, opened the door, and guided her in before him and pressed her forward a few paces through the darkness.

Then from above her and beside her lights flashed on, and Jennie saw she was in a large room whose character her swift glance could not determine. But there were no tables ashine with white napery as she had expected. Instead there was a large table of dark wood, which had something of the appearance of a desk, and a few chairs and two couches — for the rest, all she gathered in that startled first glance was that the room was large and richly furnished.

"We've beaten the others here," said Mr. Shipman, with a bit of a laugh. "But they'll soon follow." He helped her off with her cloak, and slipped out of his own coat. "We might as well rest till the others come. You'll find this a first-class chair." He pushed one of the chairs up beside the dark table, and after hesitating a second, Jennie sat down. "I feel a bit thirsty. We might as well have a sip of something while we wait. Just excuse me, please."

He passed through a door. She glanced about her. There were other doors, but what they led into she could not guess. She listened with held breath. The deep silence of the place — the absence of servants, proved first by his not ringing, and again by his going out to do service himself — a growing fear seized upon her. What could it mean?

Mr. Shipman reëntered. For all the smile on his square face, he looked to her more powerful, more dominant, than ever; and bits of hinted stories she had

heard about him flashed through her brain. He was bearing a tray which held a bottle and two glasses. This he placed upon the table, and then poured the softly hissing champagne and held out to her one glass. With a hand that she managed to keep from shaking too much she accepted the simmering goblet. Whatever might be just before her, she was going to play her part to the limit of her ability.

"Here's to our becoming very much better friends," he smiled at her, "and to our always being the best of friends!"

He raised his glass and drained it. She hardly touched hers to her lips, then set it on the tray. As she did so, her rapid gaze took in, just beyond the tray, a shining revolver lying upon a few sheets of paper.

Still smiling Mr. Shipman drew up a chair to face her and sat down. "I see you are wondering about me, Mrs. Harrison. Well, what do you think of me?"

"I—I hardly know what to think of you," she breathed.

"Then just suppose I'm one of those genii, such as you used to read about in the fairy stories, and wanted to make you a present. What present could I give you that would please you most?"

She was too much aquiver with fear and suspense to frame a new idea; so what had been the original plan in regard to Mr. Shipman automatically found utterance.

"I'd like your present to me to be something you can do for my husband."

"And what is that?"

"I'd like to have you take him into your firm. Oh, he's clever—he's fully able to do whatever might be required!"



There — she had got it out! She waited breathlessly. The utter silence, the complete isolation of the place, pressed upon her heart. For a moment he gazed at her without speaking.

“So that’s what would please you most. But before we talk about it further, let’s have some more wine.”

“None for me — please!”

“Then you make me wait until you are ready. Very well.” Again he gazed at her steadily. Then he said, in a soft voice: “Of course what you ask is a favor I can grant. But when a man — at least such a man as I am — grants a favor of that sort to a pretty woman, he rather naturally wants a favor in return from the pretty woman. I don’t need to say what that favor is; I’m sure you understand.”

She did. But she did not speak; she could not. She now clearly understood the whole of the situation she was in. She had seen too many modern plays, read too many modern novels, not to understand. And she now also understood what manner of place this was that she was in — for she had read of such places; it was one of those secret establishments that some very rich men maintain for their extremely private pleasures.

“Whether I grant your favor depends wholly on you,” his soft urgent voice went on. “I say yes, if you say yes.”

Still she could not speak. She had thought that somehow she could manage this man — and how terrifyingly she had miscalculated! White-faced, she sat unnerved by her situation — familiar situation though it was.

He leaned nearer. “Listen, Mrs. Harrison — Jennie,” he said rapidly; “I know a woman has always got to think of her reputation. And I know you must think

of yours. Everything will be perfectly safe. I know how to manage things so they are never even whispered about. So dismiss the fear of ever being found out. I can manage so that things will be even safer and more quiet than to-night."

Her gaze held to his powerful face, his eyes urgently agleam, with terrified fascination. "The others — are they not coming?" she managed to breathe.

"The others? Of course not."

"Then — then you lied to me!"

"How could I lie to you, Jennie, when of course you understood?"

She had no answer. Her soul was suddenly inundated with loathing for this man she had looked up to and sought after. But she was trapped in this soundless chamber — she had to use her wits.

She rose, and tried to speak naturally. "Perhaps it may be safe — but I'm sure the others will miss us. Let's go."

He had risen with her and he now caught her hand. "We're perfectly safe! And, Jennie, I can do not only what you asked — I'll do anything else you may ever desire! I'll give you anything — everything! I'll see that your husband has the highest place in the land. I can do it — for I have the power. And you and I, Jennie — I tell you it will be perfectly safe! Perfectly safe."

"Please — please!" cried Jennie, trying to wring free her hand.

"Jennie — Jennie — I love you!" He swept her into his arms. "Jennie, you can't leave me!"

The time had passed for the use of mere wits to escape. As she struggled with him, her eyes were caught by the

glitter of the revolver lying on the table. She seized it and thrust it hard against Mr. Shipman's chest.

"Stop!" she gasped; "stop, or I'll shoot you!"

He loosed her and staggered back, and glared at her. Her hand trembled, but she held the pistol full upon him.

"What's this mean?" he demanded.

"I'll kill you — if you don't keep your hands off of me — and let me go away from this place! I loathe you!"

His square face clenched; his look became a glower. "So, then, you've just been playing with me! Playing with me all these weeks! Do you suppose I'd have done this to-night if you had n't made me think you were leading me on?"

She perceived the element of truth in what he had said, but it did not cause her to lower her weapon. "You may be right to an extent," she admitted. "I did try to make you interested in me, but that was only because I thought that in that way I might help my husband. I see now that I was a fool — but I want you to know that I was thinking of my husband, and never of you. As for you, I loathe you!"

"This, then, is your answer?" he demanded.

"That's my answer!"

He abruptly turned his back upon her, and she thought she saw a tremor go through his body. She picked up her cloak and started to back toward the door of this strange apartment.

"Good-night," she said briefly.

"Wait!"

He wheeled about. Jennie was startled at the swift change that had taken place in the man. The passion-wrought figure had relaxed, and he was smiling — almost laughing.

"Rather a good bit of acting, don't you think?" he inquired.

"Acting?" Jennie gasped.

"On my part. Though I hope you'll forgive my familiarity in calling you Jennie. Don't you think I did the he-vampire pretty well for an amateur? Not such an inexperienced amateur, for they used to think me pretty good long ago when I was in Harvard — and since I go to the movies whenever I get a chance, of course I know just exactly how a bad rich man is supposed to behave."

"You mean this whole business — was planned — has been just acting?" breathed Jennie.

"Yes. And it has come out just the way I expected it would — and hoped it would."

"I don't believe you!" cried Jennie with sudden intensity. "I don't believe it was acting!"

"No?" he said pleasantly. "Let's consider just one detail — that revolver you are so earnestly pointing at me. I put it on my desk this afternoon with the belief that you would see it and threaten to shoot me with it. Naturally I did n't want to get killed. You can test how dangerous it is by pulling the trigger and seeing what happens to me. Or else you can break the revolver and see what's inside — if you know how to work it."

Jennie stared at him for a moment, then her eyes went waveringly down to the pistol. She broke it. The chamber was empty.

"But — but — I don't understand," she said blankly. "This — this place here?"

"I know what you thought it was. Despite my secretaries, people won't let me have peace either at my office or my home. I've got to have quiet to think out

some things, so this den of vice is just a study I keep to slip away to and hide myself in. No one knows of this place except Mrs. Shipman and myself."

Whether he was telling the truth or not, Jennie could not resist belief in what he said. "But — but why did you do this?"

"To make sure about you. I like young people. You attracted me the first time I saw you. You seemed unusual. And you attracted me even more by what you did the night you saved Mrs. Shipman's affair. Also I was perfectly aware that you were making up to me, and I was very frankly curious. When Mrs. Shipman told me of your request to use her influence to get your husband —"

"She told you that, after all?" cried Jennie.

"Yes. Then I realized that you wanted to push your husband along." Mr. Shipman was now talking very gravely. "Mrs. Harrison, there is no one I admire so much, or detest so much, as the 'pushing wife' — it depends upon the sort she is. It has been my experience in business that hardly anything can help a man so much as the right sort of wife. Some wives will go to any limit; even the limit I suggested to you a few minutes ago. There are plenty who have been willing to go to that limit with me — which is not boasting, but merely acquainting you with a commonplace experience of many men who are considered important. I don't want a man connected with me who has that sort of wife — and the only way to find out about a wife who may be that sort is to test her.

"Now, of course, I have heard of your husband," Mr. Shipman continued, "but I had never given him much thought until after I met you, and I had never



considered him in a business way at all until after Mrs. Shipman made known to me your desire. I then thought of him. Just now all great banking concerns are looking for men who are capable of filling or who can be developed to fill big positions. I was not certain about your husband; I've had varying reports. But if you were the right sort of wife, the sound sort, I knew there would be no doubt about his turning out to be what my house needs. Mrs. Harrison, you are the sort of wife who makes a man a big man. And chiefly because of you, and my belief in you, I am going to ask your husband to call to talk over with me the matter of coming into our firm."

"Mr. Shipman!" Jennie breathed.

"Incidentally," smiled Mr. Shipman, "if I am a big man, it is largely because of Mrs. Shipman. Also incidentally — though this is entirely contrary to the story books — I am one rich man who is still in love with his own wife."

He glanced at his watch. "Come on — or we'll keep the others waiting too long. For there really is a little supper — it's at the Plaza."

## CHAPTER XXX

### SHADOWS FROM THE PAST

**T**WO days later Kenneth came home flushed with the great news. He was going into Mr. Shipman's firm, and in a very responsible relationship. It was almost too good to be true. But now that he was in, he'd show them!

"And, Jennie," he cried, holding tight her hands, "it's all because of you! Mr. Shipman told me, and he was plain about it. He said he was doing it chiefly because of his and Mrs. Shipman's belief in you, and because you had come right out and asked for it. He said that, of course, he would n't have done it if he did not believe I had ability. But he was very plain about having done it chiefly because of you — and he said straight out that I had a wife that could make anything out of me. Oh, Jennie, Jennie — what a marvelous little manager you are!"

Jennie glowed at his praise, at his happiness, at their joint success. Kenneth rapidly sketched his plans. He was to enter Mr. Shipman's firm at once, but with Mr. Shipman's consent he was to retain his interest in Harrison and Company and was to remain an officer of the business. His position with his father's company would be practically unchanged — only, of course, some man would be secured for the routine work which he had done.

Jennie very frankly acknowledged to herself that luck had been with her in her wonderful upward climb. Certainly her two most recent great successes — that at

Mrs. Shipman's bazaar and the winning of Mr. Shipman's favor — had not been the direct results of plans which she had calculated would develop thus and so. But she credited herself with this: that her luck had been the luck of those who prepare themselves, who work hard, and who bide their time.

Golden days followed; days that apparently could give birth only to other days of gold. Everywhere that charming, clever, simple Mrs. Harrison was wanted. She was now on Life's highest crest; there might be yet higher pinnacles in days to come, but they would not have to be climbed — they would be elevations of her own building.

During this period of the freshness of her success, before the miracle of her having won so much could have been diminished or made to seem somewhat commonplace by time, she one afternoon had a telephone message from Slim. Slim wanted very much to see her at once and alone. She tried to put him off by telling him she had an engagement for tea at Mrs. Shipman's, but Slim was not to be denied. He declared she could cancel the engagement for tea; he had something of great interest, something new and rather important, to tell her. Experience reminded her that when Slim insisted, it would be policy to comply; so she telephoned Mrs. Shipman about a headache which was going to delay her and might even compel her to remain at home; and then she awaited Slim's arrival with a growing curiosity as to the nature of his news.

She received him in the drawing-room. He was in as smart and correct afternoon dress as could be seen in New York, and he advanced upon her smiling his friendly smile and holding out his hand. She took the

hand. It was not her nature, when they were alone, to waste time on conversation which should work around indirectly to the point.

"Well, what is it, Slim?" she demanded.

"What's the hurry, Jennie?" he objected. "Give me a chance to say how-do-you-do and how's your health."

"I want to finish and get around to Mrs. Shipman's. What is it?"

His eyes wandered about the large room with its wide doorways, then came back to her. "It's a bit personal, something we'd both rather keep private — oh, nothing to be worried about. Could n't we talk it over where we might not have an unexpected audience?"

She led him into her sitting-room, and he closed the door. "Well?" she demanded when they were seated.

"May I smoke?" he inquired.

"You know you may."

He took from an inner coat pocket a thin gold case delicately shaped to fit the chest unbulgingly, and held it opened to her. She shook her head. With easy deliberation he helped himself, returned the case and lighted the cigarette. His graceful deliberation was provoking to her — perhaps was intended so to be.

"Well?" she demanded once more.

He regarded her with the frank, open smile of old friends. Then he nodded. "Well, Jennie, you've certainly reached the very top — are settled there solidly — up where only the big people grow."

"It was n't to tell me that that you asked me to break an engagement," she returned. "Please begin with whatever you're here about."

"It's because I realized that you were so solidly at the top that I thought I'd better come." He was still

smiling his friendly imperturbable smile at her. "But if you want me to begin, perhaps the way to begin is to go back six or eight months. You remember the little chat we had late that night out on the drive at Silver Bluffs — the night you showed up Gloria Raymond, and Gloria and I were ordered off the premises?"

"Of course." She instantly sensed that, pleasant though his manner was, Slim was playing with her. "Out with it, Slim — what are you here for?"

"And you will recall," he went on, ignoring her imperative question, "that you asked why I helped you stage that little domestic drama that showed me up in the last scene as the villain of the piece. You will recall that I said I did it to help you appear the heroine and reap the heroine's reward. And you will recall that I said I also had other reasons for doing it — big reasons — reasons pertaining to the general well-being of Mr. Slim Jackson — but that I could n't tell you what they were until the time had come. The time has come for me to tell you those other reasons — or a part of them. That's why I'm here."

"Go on," she ordered.

He still smiled; his voice was even, bland — confidentially friendly. "One of the reasons was that I saw it would n't have been to my particular advantage for Gloria Raymond to have married Kenneth. It would n't have helped me at all, since I should n't have figured in it in any way and neither party would have been under any obligation to me. I suppose that's clear enough, Jennie?"

"Yes."

"I had sized up the situation, and I saw that with Gloria out of the game, you'd be certain to land Ken-



neth. Since you would n't join up with me, the next best proposition for me was to help marry you to Kenneth. See how honest I'm being with you, Jennie? I figured that if through my help you married Kenneth, and made a success of it, why, you'd always feel under some sort of obligation to me. And it's all worked out exactly as I figured — except that you've gone even higher than I counted."

Jennie recognized that what he spoke was the truth, even though he was telling her only part of the truth. She was Kenneth's wife partly because Slim had so willed it. She began to fill with sickness, with humiliation, as on that night when he had told her an earlier installment of the part that he had played, and when the glory of personal achievement had gone from her. But she controlled her faculties.

"I understand all that," she said calmly. "But that concerns the past. I'm more interested in the present."

"So am I. But I had to tell about the past in order to explain, give a reasonable basis to, the present. It's like this: My show's taking in a lot at the box, but it's an awfully expensive production, and I'm really losing money every week. You know I've had to keep Doris Dorraine on as my dancing partner; and she's the same as when I saw you last summer — not up to the level. Besides, I've guessed wrong on some stocks. I'm up against it, Jennie: I need a loan. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly clear," she said with unflinching eyes. "This seems to be a little case of blackmail. I wonder how many women you've held up, and in how many different ways? It's a grand little game — blackmail!"

"Old friends should n't use such an unpleasant word,"

he replied, his amiable tone unchanged by her sharp directness. "I merely said 'loan.' Naturally, I cannot promise when I will repay the loan. Of course, instead of calling it a loan, I might very legitimately regard it as a straight commission on business transacted."

"It's blackmail!" she exclaimed.

"It's a loan, or a commission," he corrected amiably.

"It's blackmail!" she repeated.

"Let's not waste time, Jennie, arguing over such minor details as the color of a person's eyes or the exact word to be applied to a set of circumstances. Whatever the word may be, that does n't alter the character of my need. I need money."

"And if I say I can't give you any money — what then?"

They gazed at each other steadily and in silence for a long moment. Then Slim remarked gravely:

"It would be too bad, would n't it, if it became known that Mrs. Kenneth Harrison, the great social favorite and protégée of Mrs. Shipman, was in reality the daughter of Black Jerry Malone and was the Jennie Malone who was wanted by the police as a forger."

She had sensed that he was headed toward this; nevertheless his cool level statement came as a definite shock. She realized how far-seeing he had been; how craftily he had waited until she had reached a place which he thought she would pay any price rather than lose. And it came upon her that his cleverness and her own ambition and the working-out of events had placed her entirely in his power. He could destroy her with a word, if he so wished.

"So it is sure-enough blackmail," she breathed — "backed up with a threat of exposure."

"Let's not talk that way, Jennie," he protested in his pleasant, velvety voice. "You know I don't want to expose you; I'd a lot rather have you stay up where you are. I just need some money — that's all there is to it."

She recognized her helplessness and the futility of argument. "How much?"

"I ought to have ten thousand. In cash, of course."

"Ten thousand! I have no money of my own — dad's stopped sending me any. Even if I agreed, there's no way I could get ten thousand."

"You have no end of ways, my dear," he assured her evenly. "There's Kenneth."

"I could n't ask Kenneth for any such sum as that!" she exclaimed. "There's nothing plausible I could ask it for."

"Oh, yes, there is. You could say you wanted to buy a necklace — jewels. He would loosen up. You could give me most of it, and with the balance you could buy some decent-looking fakes; they'd only cost a few hundreds. Don't give me any credit for this idea, Jennie; it's an old one that lots of women have used on their husbands."

She shook her head. "I could n't do that — not with Kenneth."

"All right, we'll pass up Kenneth. But you can easily get the money in another quarter. Handle him right, and Mr. Shipman will pass it right over to you."

She colored. "Mr. Shipman! What do you mean, Slim Jackson?" she demanded.

"Is n't my meaning perfectly obvious?"

"Say what it is that you mean!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "When a man like Mr.

Shipman, and with a reputation such as his, confers such a great advantage upon the husband of a pretty young woman, the said man has usually made a pleasant little arrangement with the said pretty young wife — but why say more, Jennie?"

"You — you believe that?" she gasped.

"It happens that I can't believe anything else, Jennie. And if he's done that much for you, he'll certainly do a lot more."

"It's a lie!" she flamed at him. "And you cut out that kind of talk, Slim Jackson! That's not my kind of business!"

"All right — all right — it was only a suggestion." His manner and voice were unperturbed. "There are still other ways you may prefer. That phony letter of Gloria Raymond's you put across — remember, that night out at Silver Bluffs — that showed you are still as clever with the pen as ever. You always were a natural-born wonder, you know. You can easily fix up a check, and take it out of some party that'll never miss the dough."

"I'm not going to do that either!" she replied sharply.

"All right. These are only suggestions to you, you know. We'll pass on. Now, there's Black Jerry. He's spent a lot of coin, and worked hard, to get you up here. Rather than have everything go to smash, I think Jerry would rustle around and dig up the necessary coin."

She blazed at him. "After all dad has done for me, do you think I'd ask him to stand for a hold-up like this?"

"All right — all right — just another suggestion — let's forget it," he continued blandly. He recrossed his

legs. "But, Jennie, I can't help you out with any more ideas; that's all I'd thought of. It's up to you now to think of a way. How you do it is all the same to me. My only concern is, I've simply got to have the money."

For all his pleasant manner she realized that he intended having it. So she fell to bargaining over the amount; and finally she got him down to where he admitted that three thousand might pull him through what he termed his "emergency."

"But, keep this in mind, Jennie: however you get the money, you are not even to hint that you are getting it for me," he said as he was leaving, menace showing through his voice. "I've got things fixed so that if anything happens to me, the whole business about you will come out automatically. You're a wise child, Jennie — and I guess you understand."

The next instant his tone had its previous blandness. "I'm sure you're not going to have any trouble. Believe me, I would n't have bothered you like this if I had n't been suddenly right up against it. And remember this: we're going right on being the same good friends as before."

After Slim's departure she still had time to have gone to Mrs. Shipman's tea, but she had forgotten all about it. In a panic she sat considering this new turn in her affairs. As she reviewed the situation she acknowledged that Slim, from Slim's standpoint, had played his cards with amazing cleverness. He had swung to her side when he had seen this course to be to his advantage, he had helped make her marriage possible; and he had held back until he thought she dared not refuse. What an unguessed number of women might he not have



trapped with his fertile ingenuity — women who dared not speak!

And if she should rebel, try to break free, Slim would surely topple her from her lofty place; she would lose this great wonderful world which with such patience and daring she had conquered. And Kenneth! What would Kenneth do when he learned the truth?

She dared not think of these things; she averted her mind from them. She must first of all satisfy Slim's demand; and so she forced her mind to consider ways and means for meeting her present crisis.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### JENNIE FINDS A WAY

JENNIE had a personal bank account, but the deposits in it had never represented more than her spending money, and now it held almost nothing. She had few jewels; this once she regretted her quiet wedding, which naturally had reduced to insignificance the giving of valuable presents; and the sale or pledging of her few jewels, besides being an inadequate procedure, might cause embarrassing questions when their absence was noticed. Yes, Slim had listed every possible method.

That evening, on the way to a dinner-party, she began to work upon Kenneth, her idea being exactly what Slim had suggested, to secure a considerable sum for the purchase of jewels and then spend a small part of it in purchasing passable imitations. She had never before directly asked him for money, and she found it hard.

"Kenneth, do you think I wear too many jewels?"

"I should say not!" he declared. It had been a good day for him; on the books he had made a great deal of money and he was in a generous humor. "I wish you had a lot more jewels — you'd do them honor!"

Encouraged by this she went on: "I saw a wonderful pearl necklace to-day at ——" mentioning a famous jeweler's, "and I tried it on, and I simply fell in love with it."

"Go ahead and buy it."

"Thanks, dear!" She held his arm close for a mo-

ment. "But they told me that it had been ordered reserved by another woman — practically sold to her. They said they really did n't care to risk selling it over the other customer's head unless they sold it for cash. It's four thousand dollars."

"Four thousand dollars cash!" He laughed. "Why, Jennie, I have n't seen four thousand dollars all at once since we've been married. My own money, I mean. I've been making a lot, of course, but it's all tied up. I'm putting it up as margin on new stocks. We're due for a big clean-up, Jennie. Ready money now — there is n't any such thing! That's no reason, though, why you should n't have a necklace," he consoled her. "Find another that suits you and get it — only buy in a place where I have credit. And, I say, Jennie, after you have looked things over, I'll come along and help you make the final choice."

Jennie saw that this way of raising money was closed to her. "You're awfully good, Kenneth. But I don't really need the necklace, and if money is so tight now, I'd rather wait until it's easier again."

Jennie considered other possibilities. Slim's suggestion that she resort to her natural gift for forgery did not occupy her mind for a moment. And his suggestion, based upon his cynical conception of her relation with Mr. Shipman, that she ask help from the financier, took no more of her time for a negative decision to be reached. This elimination narrowed her possibilities down to her father. When she considered approaching him, she felt guilty; during these last few months of her rapid rise, she had hardly thought of him at all; and her once sharply defined purpose of having his name cleared when she had gained place and influence, she had been putting

off until now it was almost forgotten. But there was no other way out of her situation; she had to see her father; and on the morning following her talk with Kenneth about jewels, she transmitted a message to her father through the medium of Uncle George.

That evening she dined out alone; she had known in advance that press of business was going to keep Kenneth downtown until late. On arriving at her hostess's house in the East Sixties, she dismissed her chauffeur for the night saying that a friend had promised to drive her home. At ten o'clock she excused herself to her hostess, saying she had promised to be back early. The night was raw, and a blustering wind swirled through the street. This gave her plausible reason for wrapping her scarf around hair and face and holding her cloak closely beneath her chin, so that she was completely muffled except for her eyes. Only one who knew her well could have identified her. She slipped around the corner, and southward through Madison Avenue, and then west through Sixtieth Street to the New Netherland Hotel where she secured a taxicab. Ten minutes later she was ringing the bell of Uncle George's apartment.

Uncle George himself admitted her and gripped her hand. "Sent my Jap out to-night: he's safe enough when he knows everything, but he's still safer when he does n't know anything." He helped her out of her coat and scarf, and then motioned up the hallway. "Jerry's waiting in my sitting-room."

Black Jerry was already on his feet when she entered. She came to a hesitating pause. He gazed at her in embarrassed wonderment. For the first time in his life he was seeing his daughter in an evening gown — and a gown whose shimmering elegance was a symbol of the

unbelievable place which she had attained. Four times he had seen her since he had sent her away from the Pekin that far-gone night in a cheap serge suit — and now here she was, this dazzling creature! It did not seem possible!

Before he had recovered she had crossed and kissed him. He was incapable of returning her kiss. His emotion self-defensively sought refuge in gruff rebuke.

"I told you you was n't to see me again, and you promised you would n't! You know what an awful risk it is!"

"I know, dad. But something's happened that makes it a bigger risk for me not to see you than for me to see you. I simply had to see you."

"What's the matter?"

She told them all — Uncle George had entered just behind her — holding back only the identity of Slim Jackson. "I can't get the money from Kenneth," she ended, "and if I don't pay I'll be pretty certain to be exposed and that will end things. Since your money and your work and your thinking — yours and Uncle George's — have put me where I am, and since what I have become belongs in a way to you, I felt I had to see you and ask what you wanted me to do."

Black Jerry ignored all the latter part of her statement. "Who's the guy that's holding you up?" he demanded grimly. And then sharply: "Is it Slim Jackson?"

She remembered the soft menace in Slim's parting words. "No, it's not Slim Jackson," she replied in a convincing tone. And in that instant memory performed one of its odd tricks: it flashed upon her that long ago she had lied to save Slim Jackson from his share of blame for that forged Morrison check which had brought her



into the Women's Night Court — and now here again she was lying to save him.

"Was it Casey?" demanded Jerry.

"No," Jennie answered.

"Sure not," agreed Uncle George. "Casey is one square cop."

"Was it the judge who tried you that night? — you remember?"

"No, it was not the judge."

"Then who is the guy?" Jerry asked, almost explosively.

"I'd better not tell you — in fact, he's fixed it so I don't dare tell you — that is, unless you want everything to end right now. Whether you want things to end, that's what you've got to decide first."

There was a moment of silence. "Jerry," Uncle George said presently, "we overlooked one little bet when we planned this business years ago. It never came into our thick old heads that, after we'd landed Jennie big, some pleasant son-of-a-gun might tumble to it all and put the screws on Jennie. And yet that was exactly what was bound to happen — sometime. Well, there's no use crying over spilled ideas we never had to spill. The main question is, as Jennie says, what are we going to do about it?"

"Well, I'm not going to have Jennie lose at this stage of the game," said Black Jerry promptly. "I'll raise the money to-morrow — you ain't been costing me anything lately, Jennie — and I'll get it around to you in the afternoon."

"But, dad," exclaimed Jennie, strangely moved by the look of mixed awe and pride and affection and harsh determination in the face of her big, unhandsome father

— “dad, it’s awfully good of you! But I’m not really asking it of you. You have already done so much for me — can you really afford it?”

“It’s my business, what I can afford and what I can’t afford,” he responded, almost roughly, though his eyes were still ashine with awe and pride. “After your getting ’way up where you are, I’m not going to let some crook upset you — you bet not! You’ll get the money to-morrow like I said.” Then he added grimly: “But if I ever find out who that guy is, his health ain’t going to be what it once was!”

“Dad — you’d better be careful what you do!”

“I’ll be careful of just one thing — and that is not to give you away,” was the grim reply.

After that there was a moment of silence among them. Being back among these dominant figures of her earlier life brought to her mind another figure of that period — a figure that in the gayety and success and general rush of events she had thought of too infrequently of late — and she asked them if they had any news of Harry Edwards.

“Yes, I visited him in the Tombs just a few days ago,” Uncle George informed her. “There’s been a lot of delay about his trial that he did n’t quite understand, but he expects his case to be heard in a month or so. He was as sure as ever about getting off — and he said Conway was ready to take care of him in a business way as soon as he was discharged. He was restless, naturally, but there is nothing at all for you to worry about, Jennie.”

When Jennie had thought of Harry during the past few months, her thoughts had contained an element of worry on her own account — the possibility of her being

dragged into the case. That element was now reassured by Uncle George's statement.

"You better be getting on home," Black Jerry spoke up gruffly. "Your staying around where I am is taking an unnecessary chance. You remember what I said to you: I don't want to see you again unless there's an awful bad break in your luck. So-long."

"Good-night, dad."

Almost timidly she held out her hand. He took it, and involuntarily their clasps tightened. The pride which had smoldered in his eyes burst into flame in this last moment that he looked upon this gorgeous figure from another world — his own daughter.

"You sure — are all right — Jennie!" he exulted huskily.

She threw her bare arms around his great neck and kissed his dark cheek. He caught her to him and kissed her passionately in return — and for a moment held her close in his great arms. Then he pushed her from him almost roughly.

"You get out of this and get home. Good-night." And he turned his back upon her and stood beside the open coal fire, and did not look at her again.

Uncle George helped her on with her things, and two minutes later she was speeding away in a taxicab. And all the time she was driving, and later on during the night, she was thinking rapidly. Though Slim had spoken of his present need, she knew he would probably try to go on bleeding her to the very end. But she felt that, during the breathing-space provided by her father's money, she could devise some means of handling the menace represented by Slim. Of course, it was going to be difficult, and it would require self-restraint and cool

nerves on her part so that Slim might not guess that she was undertaking plans of self-defense. But without a doubt, she could do it!

But one fear, one doubt, one source of wonder, she could not master and put out of her mind. Suppose, after all, in some way, Kenneth should find out? And if Kenneth should find out, then what would Kenneth do?

## CHAPTER XXXII

### HOW SLIM PLAYED HIS CARDS

**B**UT Jennie's very success, its constant and insistent demands upon her, worked against this purpose to make her success more secure. There followed now a period of days and nights so filled with notable social events that Jennie really had no time for the thinking she had promised herself to do concerning Slim Jackson.

Jennie was riding at the very top now, and despite flurries of fear and dizziness, she felt secure in her place. Kenneth — she had certainly made good for him; he certainly had no reason to regret his choice! In the excitement which was the substance of her life, she believed — except when fears did break in and torment her — that she had won magnificently. She feared no recognition from the public of her childhood: if there was to be recognition and unintentional betrayal from that source, it would have come long ago. And as for the judge who had berated her in the Night Court all those years ago, how he had fawned before her at Mrs. Shipman's bazaar, never guessing who she was! As for Harry Edwards — she kept Harry from her mind. And as for Gloria Raymond, Gloria's hatred for her was without limit, and Gloria would rejoice to strike her to the heart, but Gloria had no weapon. Of them all, Slim Jackson was the only source of uneasiness. And Slim she would checkmate somehow — but she still had not found the "how."

March passed in this brilliant excitement, in which



period Jennie seemed to have to herself only the time she spent in sleeping and in changing from one gown to another — and “that young Mrs. Kenneth Harrison” became more of a figure than ever. But because she had not taken the time to work out a counter-plan against Slim Jackson, she twice in this period suffered the penalty. Twice he had made demands upon her — and there had been nothing for her but twice again to accept aid from her father.

At the end of a chill afternoon early in April, when she came out of Mrs. Shipman’s house where there had been a very exalted tea, she looked about for her car which she had ordered to wait. But her big English-built machine did not wheel slowly to the curb, and, moreover, it was not among the line of waiting motors. Instead, a car of long lines and small coupé body drew up to the curb, and out of this stepped a figure in a heavy motor coat.

“I’m taking you home to-night, Jennie,” said the figure in a low voice.

“Slim Jackson!” she breathed.

“I sent your car away and waited,” he explained. “I wanted to have a little visit with you.”

He took her arm to assist her into the machine, but she stood still and gazed into his eyes. His lean, handsome face, all but muffled in his high collar, was smiling amiably — but a smile on Slim’s face never had been an index to his purpose. Her instinct, rather than conscious thought, reminded her that it was not wisdom to oppose Slim’s wishes unnecessarily; so she stepped into Slim’s closed machine. It’s tiny body was low-slung and had seats only for two.

“Sweet little car,” Slim remarked pleasantly as he

guided the machine away. "Just the thing for a *tête-à-tête* — that's what I bought it for. A man often wants to take a pleasant lady out when he does n't want the long ears of a chauffeur reaching out to scoop up every word that's above a whisper. It's mighty handy — and I sure do love this bit of junk."

They had turned into the Park and had swung southward. "But I thought you were taking me home!" exclaimed Jennie.

"I am — only not directly, Jen. I want you to see how swell this little car behaves."

He chattered on, his words flowing readily. Jennie suspected some purpose behind his amiable, light-mannered exterior, but she did not become actively suspicious until the car passed Twenty-third Street and still kept going southward.

"Where are you going?" she demanded.

"Down to Washington Square," he replied.

But at Washington Square he turned the car eastward and began twisting among the broken cross-streets that lie across Broadway to the east and south of the Square. She caught the wrist of one of the hands at the wheel.

"Turn this car right back!" she breathed sharply.

"I will — in a few minutes," he chuckled softly, with a low laugh. "It's been a long time since you and I have visited our part of America. Let's have a look at what the old place is like. It's all right, Jen — nobody down here would ever connect us up, the Jennie Malone and the Slim Jackson that used to be, with a smart little go-cart like this; and, anyhow, they'd never dream of us being down here; and besides, if anybody really saw you, why done up in furs as you

are, nobody would ever think of you except as a nose and a bunch of awfully swell clothes."

They shot through the edge of Jennie's old country and on downtown. Presently Slim slowed his car till it hardly moved. He nodded through the window at his right.

"Never did care much for that type of architecture — did you, Jen?"

She glanced out. Through the faintly illumined dusk she saw a high wall, and above it rows of grated windows. With a leap of the heart she recognized the place. It was the Tombs.

"Our good old pal, Harry Edwards, is sure up against it," said Slim in what sounded a voice of sober sympathy. And then, in a tone of curiosity, his eyes on her: "That's always seemed a funny case to me, Jen — almost phony. Remember that I saw you and Harry up on the Grantham roof that night at about the time Harry is said to have croaked Murdock. Never have been just able to figure out just how Harry could be at two places so far apart at times that were so close together. Could you?"

The overhead light in the car had not been switched on, but the tiny lamps over the clock and the mileage dial gave enough illumination for her to make out his face. It was smiling with mockery. She was suddenly tense; breathlessly she waited for him to go on — she expected the worst. But his next words were in themselves almost casual.

"Sometimes hard to know just how to play the cards, is n't it?"

But despite the casual tone, she was sure that Slim guessed, or knew, something of the truth of Harry's

connection with the Murdock murder — and guessed, or knew, something of her connection with Harry's imprisonment. But how much did he know? And if he knew, how would he use it?

She was so engrossed with these questions that when the car stopped, she did not know for the first instant where they were. Then she again glanced out the window.

"Slim Jackson — the Pekin!" she breathed.

"Yes," he said evenly. "You remember I told you I was going to bring you home."

For the moment her faculties were paralyzed. Very coolly Slim drew out a key, slipped it into a slot in the steering-wheel, and locked the car.

"This is where we get out, Jen."

"But we'll be recognized!" she exclaimed. "And — and there's father!"

"No, father is n't there." He grinned at her, with just a flash of his old-time appreciation of his own cleverness. "Uncle George does n't know it but Uncle George sent Black Jerry a message to wait for him at the Astor Hotel grill between six and six-thirty. Jerry has just about now reached the Astor Hotel. It's lucky people are used to seeing all kinds of cars waiting in front of Jerry's joint — so this won't attract any attention. We'll have your old home all to ourselves. Come on my dear!"

"I shall not!" breathed Jennie.

"No? Do just as you please. But if you don't ask me up to your old home while I smoke a cigarette or two, I'll invite the people in the Pekin out here to meet an old friend. This is a dead hour in the Pekin, but there'll be half a dozen or so in there who remember

you and who will be delighted to meet you — and also surprised."

He stepped out of the car and made for the Pekin's entrance. She recalled in a flash that although he had adopted "Jackson Holt" as a stage name, he had never tried to hide his identity, and that therefore he had nothing to fear. Instantly she was out of the car.

"Slim!" she called huskily; "Slim!"

He turned back and closed the door of the car. "I knew you wouldn't deny me so slight a request," he said graciously, and guided her across the sidewalk. Fortunately this was the hour when the Pekin's neighborhood was at its evening meal, so the street was empty, but nevertheless Jennie pressed her furs up to her very eyes. Inside the tiny hallway, its gas as yet unlighted, Slim halted her.

"Remember the last time we stood here, Jen?" he whispered in good-humored reminiscence. "Five years ago. I was a bum actor pulling down fifteen a week from Black Jerry — and you were just Jennie Malone. And I tried to kiss you and you came back with a peach of an upper-cut. You sure had the pep in the old days, Jen — same as you've got it now!"

He chuckled softly and directed her up the black stairway. At its top he spoke again.

"Guess you and Jerry never knew it, but I got hold of a key in the good old times — and I still have it."

He unlocked the door, pressed her through, locked it, and lighted the gas. For all her throbbing wonder as to Slim's purpose, she glanced around her girlhood's home. She had not seen it since that midnight years ago when her heart had driven her down here from the fresh wonders of the Harrisons' house, and Casey had come in



unexpectedly upon his escaped prisoner with her family and had given her her chance to escape back to her great life. The little sitting-room was furnished just as of old, only to her new eyes it seemed unbelievably dingy and shabby. With the eyes of the trained housekeeper she saw everywhere the careless work of the charwoman, and a sharp pang cut her through that her father had to live his lonely life amid such dirt and inattention. And then she noted her piano; it seemed a poor, battered cripple, indeed. And as she looked, a far-gone scene came back: she at the piano, Harry standing beside her, the two of them softly singing the Barcarolle from the "Tales of Hoffmann" when Black Jerry and Uncle George had entered, Casey behind them to arrest her for that Morrison forgery . . .

She was brought out of her swift retrospect by Slim's voice beginning to hum, "Be it ever so humble."

She turned upon him quickly. "Why did you bring me down here?" she demanded.

"Why?" He was again smiling amiably. "Is n't it plain enough? I thought we both might enjoy a tabloid version of Old Home Week."

She faced him squarely. "Cut out your funny lines. What's it for?"

His look was still bland. "Well, it's a bit like this, Jen," he drawled. "I've been wanting to come to a real understanding with you this long while, but you have n't given me a fair chance. It struck me that you and I might get down to business a little better if both of us came back to the spot we both started from. We might then appreciate a little better the place we've reached, and how unpleasant it would feel to return to what we used to be. Just a well-tried stage device, my dear —

to bring two extremes into immediate contrast. The Park Avenue apartment and Mrs. Shipman's swell tea on the one hand — on the other hand, the old home above the Pekin. Always an effective bit of business, Jennie — one of the first things I learned about the stage."

She regarded him steadily. "I suppose," she finally said, her voice calm enough, "that this is an attempt to blackmail me with the help of a new setting?"

"You always were quick to get the point," he answered cheerfully. "That's one reason I always thought it such a pleasure to work with you. I sure do need some money, Jen — and need it bad and quick."

Jennie did some quick thinking. She realized in a flash that all her resources would some day fail her, and on that basis she would then have to face him. She pulled herself quickly together.

"I have been fooling with you long enough, Slim," she returned, regarding him squarely. "We might as well come to a real show-down right here."

"A show-down — that's just what I've been wanting, Jen. A real sure-enough show-down — that's why I brought you here."

"I'm here, and I say you'll get nothing more out of me," she replied sharply. "There are my cards, face up."

"That's sure a nifty place you and Kenneth have uptown," he reminded her softly, his narrowed gray eyes very bland. "And Mrs. Kenneth Harrison has sure become one of the regular swells. And I have an idea it seems a bit nice, having a dame like Mrs. Shipman as a pal. And so on and so on — you can finish the picture." He glanced about the shabby, neglected little sitting-room. "As I remarked before, Jennie, I

brought you from Mrs. Shipman's down here in order to make it — you know — concrete. It would n't be pleasant, would it, to come back here and be just Jennie Malone, the daughter of Black Jerry Malone?"

"You could have made your threat more direct, Slim. In spite of it all, my answer is the same. You get nothing more out of me."

His bland expression did not change. "Mind telling me why not, Jen?"

"It's not necessary to pay you," she said. Now that she had decided to defy him, she felt more substance to an argument her hurried mind had more than once urged upon her. "And it's only because my nerve left me that I've paid you what I have. As Jennie Malone, back down here, I'd not be worth a cent to you. As Mrs. Kenneth Harrison I may be of some value to you. By exposing me, you'd be throwing away a good thing — by your own act you'd turn me into a dead loss for yourself. I know you're too wise a crook actually to do that. There, Slim Jackson — that's my hand!"

She waited. He did not speak for a moment or more — and when he did it was with the same bland drawl.

"And a good hand it is, too, Jen. I had an idea that some day you'd call me. In fact, I've rather been wanting you to call me. I have only a dinky two pairs. You take the pot."

She managed to control the relief she felt. "Since you admit that to be the case, then I'm going home — whether you take me or not."

He caught her arm. "Just a minute, Jen. We're going to open a fresh deck, and there's going to be a new deal."

"What's the idea?" she demanded.

He was now smiling. "I've already told you part of the idea. But that never was the *real* thing. When I helped stage that little scene that ended in your marrying Kenneth, why, of course, I saw the chance of getting a bit of change by holding you up after you'd really become somebody. I've picked up the change, and that part of the show is over. Now for the second act, now for the fresh deck!"

His voice, no longer soft, became suddenly vibrant with intensity, and his words rushed from him with an earnestness that had in it nothing of acting. "Jennie, that dancing partner of mine, Doris Dorraine, is getting so damned rotten that every night I'd like to chuck her over the footlights into the bunch in the first rows she's always showing her damned teeth at in what she thinks is a smile. Jennie, you've got to ready yourself for the part and come into the show. What with the wads of publicity you'd bring, and what with the things you can actually do, the piece will make a killing! And we'll keep on making killings — you and I!"

"Slim!" she broke in, gasping at his passionate words. "Slim!"

He was such a Slim now as she had never known him to be, trembling, eyes ablaze with eagerness. "Jennie," his words tumbled out, "I've played a long game! I was willing to wait, for I saw that to do it in a big way took time. But the time's over. You're at the top, Jennie! There's no use my waiting any longer. Jennie, I love you! — all the while I've loved you! And now we're going to team up — on stage and off — like I said to you downstairs long ago! Jennie — you're coming with me!"

She was so amazed by this quivering, passion-shaken

Slim that for a space she could command no words at all.

"Well?" he cried. "Well?"

"Slim Jackson!" she breathed. "You suggest such a thing to me! Why, I thought you were a friend of Kenneth?"

"So I am!" he returned, with a half-savage laugh. "I'm a friend of everybody. But the man whose best friend I am is called Slim Jackson!"

"You're actually proposing that I run away with you — desert my husband?" she cried incredulously. Then with vehemence: "Slim, I'll never do it!"

The shock of her vehement declaration partially restored his control, but his eyes still glittered with excitement, and his words still came rapidly. "You don't like the idea of the scandal? Well, after all, there need n't be any scandal. I'll wait a little longer. You can get a divorce and come to me straight. And you need n't worry about being exposed as Jennie Malone at a public trial. The case can be tried by a referee — sealed papers, you understand — and you'll get big alimony. And there'll be no difficulty at all about getting a decree. There's plenty of evidence, and I can slip it right into your hand!"

She was now looking at his excited, lean face, her soul suddenly sick. "Evidence of — of that kind?" she whispered. "Since — since we were married?"

"What's wrong, Jen? You're not trying to make me think you really care for Kenneth? Say, don't try to put that over — I know better!"

"You mean he's — you mean evidence of that kind?" she repeated.

"God, Jen, are you such a sweet innocent little boob



as all that!" His incredulity was so great that his face relaxed into a smile. "Honest, Jen, I did n't think you'd ever show yourself such a country kid as that. What's wrong with you? — beginning to believe in that ancient junk the pulpit ballyhoo artists try to put across? Wake up, kid! Come back to America and the twentieth century. Listen — it's up to you to get wise to your husband. Kenneth was sure gone on you the first few months, and he's mighty proud of you now — he sure ought to be, the way you're putting yourself and him across. But when it comes to the girl proposition — well, he's a smooth article, Kenneth is, and has never used a press agent — but there were a lot of girls in Kenneth's life before his marriage, and there have been one or two since. I guess you get me. Why, if you want evidence, Doris Dorraine herself —"

"I don't believe you!" Jennie flared at him. "You always were a liar, Slim Jackson, and you still are a liar! You've tried to frighten me by bringing me back here. Well, do anything you like! I won't go with you in the way you propose! I would n't go with you even if I were free! I would n't go with you even if you were the last man alive! I hate you — loathe you — you crook, you schemer —"

He caught her into a fierce embrace. "That makes us two of a kind. Oh, yes, you are coming along with me! You may not believe it, but you are! I've waited for you long enough! You're mine — mine!"

She struggled silently to free herself. She dared not cry out for fear of bringing up a crowd from the Pekin; and the thick old rug muted the movements of their swaying bodies. But she could not break the clasp of those wiry arms. Then she leaned back as far in his em-

brace as she could, and hammered at his face — just as she had done that other time he had tried to kiss her ages ago down in the hallway. He accepted the blows with unaverted face, laughing; the range was too short for her fists to gain a really paining drive.

“Keep it up, Jen!” he taunted her. “I love it! For every time you land, I’m going to collect a kiss. So the more, the better!”

Pantingly, wordlessly, she fought him off. But his arms tightened, his face approached hers inch by inch. “I see I’ve got to break you in, Jen,” he exclaimed, “and here’s where I do it!”

She did not know that she could hate with such fury as she hated that smiling, nearing, eager face. She fought until she felt that she was about to burst with her breathing: fought not so much out of fear of anything Slim might then intend doing her, as she fought out of a boundless loathing. And yet, struggle as she would, nearer came the eager, smiling, confident face — ever nearer.

And then, in her frantic fighting, she remembered that there was once a button which rang a bell down in Jerry’s office, a signal that he was wanted above. She slowly maneuvered toward it — reached out a hand to the spot where it used to be — it was still there! — and pressed it. The next moment she was struggling again — struggling with only faint hope in that bell, for Slim had tricked her father away on a fool’s errand — struggling against a strength that outmatched hers — a strength that slowly, steadily, was breaking her down.

And then, just as it seemed that her last strength had gone and that Slim’s hated lips would inevitably collect a kiss as his first token of victory, there were

sounds at the door. The next instant she almost collapsed, so suddenly was she freed from the support of Slim's taut arms; and there was Slim, yanked backward by the great hand of her father clutching his collar, and there was her father's dark face glowering convulsively upon him, and there closing the door was Uncle George.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### LIFE SETS A PROBLEM

**B**LACK JERRY shook Slim as though he were but a straw's weight. "What're you doing here? — and to my daughter?" he gritted.

Whatever else he might be, Slim Jackson was no physical coward. Yet he paled at the fierce look in the dark face, at the tremulous, unleashed power in the big body, of the man he thought he had got safely out of the way. He knew his life hung in the balance. Nevertheless, Slim kept his wits. He realized instantly that he had to stake his all upon a bold play — upon a possibility that might no longer exist.

"Slow down, Jerry; you're seeing this thing all wrong," he said. "Jennie and I were waiting for you — and while we waited we just got into one of our old-time scraps."

"Don't try any bunk on me!" Jerry warned him. "Don't feel too confident just because I'm holding you by your collar instead of by your throat. I may want to kill you, and if I held you by the throat the fingerprints would show — and if I ever kill you nothing's going to show. So you'd better change your nature, Slim, and spill out a little truth!"

There was, indeed, Slim saw, nothing for him but to continue to play what might be a long chance. "Honest, Jerry, it's just like I said. Jennie and I simply got to scrapping the way we used to do. Ask Jennie."

"It did n't look much like it!" retorted Jerry. But he turned to his daughter. "How about it, Jennie?"

Jennie hesitated. Slim watched her breathlessly. At that instant Jennie felt not so much fear on her own behalf as fear of what her father might do and its consequences to him.

"It's just as Slim said," she managed to say. "We — we forgot ourselves and began scrapping — just as though we were kids again."

"Are you sure about that?" Jerry demanded of Jennie in his tense gruffness. "You know I've sometimes thought he's the guy that's been blackmailing you. If he is, say the word and he'll never trouble you no more. Uncle George will first help you make your get-away back uptown where you belong. After you're gone, I'll twist Slim's neck and then let him slide down the stairway. Nobody can ever prove but what it was an accidental fall down the stairway that broke his neck. How about it, Jennie? I know he's a crook, and has always been a crook — but is he the man?"

Again Slim held his breath. And again Jennie did not answer for an instant. She saw relief, instant relief, from all the danger to herself that Slim personified.

But again she thought chiefly of her father. She remembered how the charge of a double murder of which he was innocent had darkened all his life. With such a character as he already bore, and the charge of another murder which might be made against him, why —

"No, Slim is not the man," she interrupted her swift thoughts to say.

"You're sure about that?"

"I'm sure, dad."

"Well, I'm not so sure," grunted Jerry. He turned again on Slim. "What did you come up here for?"



Slim's courage was now well in hand. "That's simple, Jerry. I came because Jennie asked me to. She said she wanted to see you again, and the old place. She asked me because she wanted company and I was the only one of her present friends who knew who she really was. That's all there is to it."

"Is that so, Jennie?" Black Jerry demanded.

"Yes, dad," she answered.

"I'm not so sure about that either," he returned. "I guess you remember how many times I've ordered you not to take the risk of coming around me."

It made her sick, this lying to save Slim Jackson. But then she was really lying to save her father. "I remember, dad — but I — I — just wanted to see you."

There was something Slim had been wondering about since Black Jerry's unexpected entrance — that message of his which should have kept Jerry uptown. "But there's one thing I don't just get, Jerry. Jennie said you'd be sure to be in at this time, but we've been hanging around here half an hour. Where the devil have you been? — that's what Jennie does n't understand."

"Been downstairs in my office with Uncle George here all the time till that bell rang — except for a few minutes."

Slim tried to make his query seem casual. "Except for a few minutes?"

Jerry addressed Uncle George, his tone meditative. "That message I got from you saying you wanted me to meet you uptown still seems mighty strange — when you never sent it, and yet when you actually did want to see me."

"It certainly is some coincidence," agreed Uncle George.

"Those few minutes you were out must have been when we came in," remarked Slim. "When was that?"

"About an hour ago," replied Jerry. "I had just started uptown to meet Uncle George like the message said, when I bumped into Uncle George coming down to see me."

"Just got an idea, Jerry," said Uncle George. "That message may have been sent by some friend of Harry Edwards who did n't dare show his hand."

"Harry Edwards!" Jennie exclaimed.

"Yes, Harry Edwards is what we've been talking about," the old man answered slowly. "And we'd decided that I was to manage to meet you somewhere and put the situation up to you. But since you're here, I guess we might as well talk the situation over now."

"What situation, Uncle George?" she breathed.

"Wait a minute," interposed Black Jerry. "Want to talk with Slim around?"

"I guess there can't be much Slim does n't know already or won't know soon," replied the old man with a gaze of disfavor on Slim. "But it helps my eyes when I don't have to look on him, and the breathing seems easier. Suppose you just shove him into one of the bedrooms — it does n't matter much if he does hear; he may be handy to take Jennie home when we're through."

Black Jerry gripped Slim's arm and started him toward a door. "Come along!"

"Need n't use force, Jerry," Slim protested pleasantly. "Glad to be your guest as long as you like." Drawing out a thin cigarette case of filigreed silver, he passed into what had been Jennie's room in the years gone by. Jerry closed the door, locked it, and pocketed the key.

"We'd better all have a chair," suggested Uncle George. "There's quite a bit to say."

They all sat down, and Jennie waited tensely. There was a moment or two of silence, the two men regarding Jennie steadily.

Uncle George broke the silence. "It sure is one hell of a proposition," he said in a slow, grave voice.

"But you have n't told me yet what the proposition is!" cried Jennie.

"Years ago," Uncle George went on as if she had not spoken, "Jerry and I tried to manage your life for you. You were only a kid then, so our butting in was all right. But you're a grown woman now, and we feel you've got to decide the business for yourself. It's about Harry Edwards I'm talking. You know how things stand with him?"

"Only that he expects to get off when his case comes to trial."

"Well, it's not going to turn out like that," Uncle George announced with quiet solemnity.

"No?" she cried, half starting from her chair. "Why not?"

"For several reasons. We'll come to them. But first, you and I know he did n't kill Murdock — and we know he went to the Tombs and let some evidence be piled up against him in order to shield another man. We know that, too, don't we?"

"Yes."

"And I guess we know who Harry went to jail to protect — and I guess we have a guess as to who really killed Larry Murdock."

"Sam Conway!"

"Exactly. Sam Conway. I have n't a doubt that

Sam Conway himself shot Murdock. I don't know whether Conway was in earnest, and honestly thought he could really do it, when he promised to get Harry off if Harry would draw attention away from Conway by standing for the Murdock murder. As I say, I don't know what was in Conway's mind then. But I know what's in his mind now. A lot of things have happened since last summer. For one thing, the death of Murdock has made Conway a much bigger political figure in this town, and a lot of things go exactly the way Conway wants them to go. In the second place, that Murdock affair has just taken such a twist that there *has got to be a conviction*. The way things stand now, Conway could n't help Harry even if he wanted to — not unless he was willing to do more than Sam Conway will ever be willing to do. In short, it's got to be either Conway or Harry — and it's not going to be Conway."

"Uncle George!" gasped Jennie.

"Conway is going to use all his power to save himself," the old man went on. "Those witnesses who gave testimony against Harry at the preliminary hearing are not going to disappear as promised, but are going to take the stand against Harry — and there will be other witnesses. Harry's case comes up for trial in a month or so — whenever the District Attorney feels like it. No story Harry can tell now about Conway's asking him to stand for the trial, and nothing else he can say, will be believed. It will sound mighty cheap. The way things are fixed, the verdict is the same as rendered and the sentence the same as pronounced. And I don't need to tell you what the sentence is going to be. There — that's how the case stands. We thought you ought to know."

"My God!" she breathed, appalled. "And Harry was so sure Sam Conway would get him off!"

"Sam Conway, to save himself, is doing his damnedest to get Harry sent up. Harry does n't have a chance. That is, unless —"

He paused, his old eyes fixed on her steadily. Suddenly sick, dizzy, as never before, she knew the uncompleted part of Uncle George's sentence. But none the less her dry lips asked:

"Unless what, Uncle George?"

"Unless you were to state that you were with him on the Grantham roof at the very time the murder was committed over near Third Avenue."

"But — but — Uncle George!" she breathed.

"Of course, I could help alibi him," the old man continued. "And I could get that little elevator man to help out with the alibi. But that would be certain to drag you in somehow, Jennie; and I'm not going to make a move without your O.K. Now it's all up to you, Jennie. Are we going to do anything to help Harry?"

Terror seized upon her as her swift mind visualized herself on the witness-stand down in the Criminal Courts Building. "But — but — if I went on the stand — the District Attorney —" She could get out no more.

"That's exactly it," Uncle George said gravely. "Of course, you'd clear Harry, but the District Attorney would cross-examine you until he'd found out every last word about you. And what he'd learn would give New York the biggest jolt it's had for years."

She did not speak: her tense faculties were all engrossed in considering the consequences. Certainly it would all come out — who she was — the bold and



successful pretense she had practiced upon the great world — even that far-distant incident of her running away to escape sentence for forgery. Her whole being was in violent revulsion. It was n't fair! Why, oh, why, had Fate played such a trick upon her, just when everything was going at its best? . . .

Uncle George had seen the struggle going on within her, and he had waited. But at length he spoke.

"Well, how about it, Jennie?"

But her father spoke before Jennie could reply. He had not said a word during all this talk. But now as he spoke, his face was defiant, dogged.

"After all the hard work there's been to get Jennie 'way up where she is, I don't see where we're called on to make a mess of it all just because one guy has got in bad."

"I don't say we have," returned Uncle George. "It's just a matter of which of two ways will make Jennie happiest. Deciding which is her business, Jerry; we don't know which will suit her best; that's why we decided it was best to tell her. Now, Jennie, it's all up to you. Jerry and I stand by whatever you want."

"But — but —" she breathed desperately — "surely there's some other way!"

"I've been over it with Harry's lawyer; cleverest lawyer that we could hire. He does n't think Harry has a chance in a million. But he does n't know the cards we hold — if we want to play them."

"And Harry? Have you seen him? What is Harry going to do?"

"He'll keep you out of it unless you come in of your own choice. He's going to say he'd been drinking that evening — does n't remember much about that night —

is sure he did n't kill Murdock. But with all the testimony against him, that sort of talk can't help him a nickel's worth in a first-degree murder charge." Uncle George slowly shook his head. "No, there's only those two ways I said — no others. But you need n't make up your mind to-night, Jennie. Take your time to think it all over, and then send us word."

Jennie turned to her father. "Which shall I do, dad?"

"It's up to you to say what *you* want. Harry Edwards and all the others can go to hell. You're the only one who counts for anything in this business with me."

And then he added brusquely. "Do your thinking at home. You'd better make your get-away from here before too many people begin to trail into my joint. Some one might see you." He crossed and opened the door of Jennie's old room. "Come on, Slim; time for you to be hitting the trail uptown with Jennie."

Slim stepped jauntily forth, hiding a well-acted yawn. "Had a nice little nap, Jerry. Thanks for putting me up. Shall I tip the chambermaid?"

"Better cut out your comedy stuff," growled Jerry, glaring at him. Just then Black Jerry was filled with impotent rage against Fate — just as Jennie was; and Slim was the nearest target for his wrath. "You think you've traveled a long ways since you used to sling your limber legs down here for a few bones a week. But I don't trust you and I'm going to watch you — and you have n't gone up so far that I can't reach up and twist off your damned neck any time I think you're trying to put any queer business across on my Jennie. Now, you get out of here, quick, and no funny lines as you go off the stage!"

Grimly Jerry pushed Slim toward the door. Slim was still smiling, but he said nothing; he had gained a considerable amount of wisdom, had Slim. Jerry pushed him through and turned on Jennie.

"In making up your mind, don't you think about anybody but yourself," he ordered gruffly. "Good-night."

His manner was forbiddingly peremptory and gruff.

"Good-night," Jennie said in a faint voice, and to Uncle George she nodded, then she slipped through the door without even so much as a farewell glance at her old home. She knew her father loved her, but she could not know the trouble and concern and worry and the will for desperate deeds she left on the other side of the closed door in Black Jerry's heart.

At the foot of the darkened stairway Slim's shadowy form awaited her. He slipped a hand through her arm, and laid hold of the knob of the side door through which she used to steal into the Pekin.

"Remember our last dance in there, Jen?" he whispered. "How about it? — Let's go in and show the old dump how we used to dance."

She knew he was only trying to provoke her, that he had no more desire than herself to enter; yet so high-strung was she at that moment that she could not refrain from jerking him forward and exclaiming, "Come on!"

"Somehow, Jennie, you're losing your old pep," he grumbled at her on the way to the front door.

The street was clear, and a few minutes later they were out of the neighborhood and out of danger. But Jennie had too much to think of to have anything to say, and she allowed Slim's many attempts at opening a conversation to go unnoticed — until he remarked:

"I say, Jennie, tell an old friend just what is that business between you and Harry Edwards?"

"That business is none of your business!" she returned sharply.

"Ouch!" he said with a soft laugh. By this time they were nearing Jennie's home. "Look at me, Jennie." She did so; he spoke quietly, with none of his previous taunting, teasing tone. "Here is something that is my business. And this is the last call for the dining-room — for me, at any rate. Was that final, what you said before your father came in — that you are not going to team up with me later?"

Here was one matter that had no two sides for Jennie. "That was and is final!" she said emphatically, as the car slowed down. "And what's more, I've learned I don't have to pay you blackmail any more. So we're through, Slim Jackson!"

He regarded her steadily, thoughtfully. "So!" His gray eyes narrowed and for an instant flashed with a strange look — then they were the same as before.

"So, we're through, are we, Jennie?" he murmured in an even tone as he helped her out. "All right. Good-bye."

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### JENNIE THINKS IT OVER

**I**N the days that followed — in the wonderful home that was hers — as she hurried about other homes yet more wonderful in which she was always welcome — Jennie was feverishly thinking — thinking! This world was hers — she had worked for it — she had won it. Never before had it seemed to her so brilliant, so desirable.

But always she was thinking of what she should do about Harry — what should be the answer she had promised to send back to Uncle George and her father. This was the beginning of the period when the soul of Jennie went through its sorest trial — that young soul as it was moulded and directed by her long childhood down at the Pekin, by her years of transformation at Braithewood Hall, by her father's point of view and his rough love of her, by her own ambitions, and lately by the life on this upper level where she now lived. But she took no time for the searching of her own soul, for a careful study of the fundamental materials of her own being. Had she done so, a decision might have been simpler.

Her thoughts were forever swerving around to Kenneth, and were forever repeating themselves. If she went to Harry's rescue, Kenneth would, of course, find out; and if she did not, he might find out anyway. Kenneth, in his relation with her fate, was inextricably connected with Harry's case — and yet to her he was also an entirely separate problem.



She had been strong, she had kept her nerve, she had managed life — and yet, despite all her present efforts at self-control, her fear kept on mounting and mounting until within herself there was a never-subsiding panic. And the heart of it all remained ever the same: Suppose Kenneth should find out? And what would Kenneth do?

Her concern was so acute not because she loved him: she knew no more now whether she really loved Kenneth than she had known when he had proposed to her down on the landing-platform at Silver Bluffs — she had been far too busy to turn an analytical eye upon her affections: but she admired him as she had then, and they had had the excitement of a dazzling rise together. The great central cause of her fear was, that though she had builded for herself so wonderful a career, she had builded it entirely upon Kenneth. She was now reaping the consequences of the fundamental idea by which she had thought to hold him to herself — her plan to push him to the top of the business world, her plan to win to the social crest and carry him with her. Despite her personal ambition, she had been careful to make herself “Mrs. Kenneth Harrison.” Yes, all the splendid structure of her life was builded on Kenneth!

Her highly excited mind was forever visualizing the moment of exposure. She could see his horrified amazement — could see his face tighten with wrath.

This became an obsession with her. She waited with sickened apprehension every home-coming of Kenneth, and her nerves jumped at every unexpected noise. Perhaps this growing apprehension was incited to some degree by a change she noted in Kenneth himself. On the very evening when Slim had carried her off down to the Pekin, she had noticed the beginning of a different

Kenneth. He came home late that night, and was distraught, nervous; once or twice she caught his eyes on her with a narrowed, fixed look. Her heart jumped wildly: did he suspect? — had some hint been given him? — or did he already know? Again and again in the next day or so she caught him eyeing her with that same strange, questioning look; always, when so caught, he was quick to start a conversation upon some matter of no consequence.

One evening when she surprised such a look upon his face, she determined to have an end to the suspense. She gripped what remained of her old courage in her two hands, and squarely asked him:

"What's the matter, Kenneth?"

"Why?"

"You were looking at me so queerly."

He laughed; it was rather a forced laugh. "If I looked queer, I guess it was just the result of unconsciously carrying business in my head after business hours. Have you noticed the market lately?"

"No."

"It's in an awful mess. Prices jumping in every direction. Nobody knows where he stands. So if I seem to worry, that's all there is to it."

"Are you sure, Kenneth?"

"That's absolutely all there is to it, Jennie. Honest."

She believed him because she wanted to believe him — though she was not at all certain that she did believe him. However, whatever of belief she did have was enough to sway her fluctuating soul to a decision in regard to Harry Edwards. She could not give up all this brilliance she had worked so hard to win! She simply could not! Something would turn up before his

trial that would save Harry; of course it would — it simply had to!

And that same evening, disguising her handwriting, but using the code which Uncle George would know, she feverishly wrote him her decision — it was final. And the next morning Uncle George went down to the Pekin and showed it to Black Jerry.

"I'm glad that's the way she's come to see it," Jerry said gruffly. "No sense in her smashing everything just because Harry Edwards was a fool."

"I suppose so — I suppose so," Uncle George responded gravely. And from the Pekin he went on down to the Tombs and told Jennie's decision to Harry.

Pallid though the long months of prison had made him, Harry bleached to a more bloodless hue. However, he did not lose his composure.

"You know, Uncle George, I never asked you to put this up to her," he said.

"I know you did n't, son. It was my idea. I just thought she ought to know and decide for herself."

Harry's gray eyes regarded Uncle George steadily through the bars. For a moment there was silence except for those low, shuffling sounds which abide in prisons. Then Harry spoke, his voice quiet and with the composure which is fitting last words:

"Of course, that means my finish. You and Jerry know how I feel about her. Since she does n't care for me, I don't blame her, and I want her to stick on up where she is."

When Uncle George turned from that erect figure on the other side of the bars, with its white face and steady eyes, he brushed something away from his own old eyes. Life was queer! — yes, life was certainly queer.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### HOW KENNETH TOOK THE NEWS

THE end of April arrived; within a few days they were to move out to Silver Bluffs for the summer; and then there came a morning when Kenneth's behavior at leave-taking was unusually disturbing. He said good-bye, started out of the great living-room, then turned at the door and gazed at Jennie with questioning eyes.

"Jennie —" he said abruptly. "Jennie —"

Her heart leaped chokingly into her throat, but she forced herself to speak calmly. "Yes, Kenneth. What is it?"

"I wonder, Jennie — I wonder —" and again he stopped.

"Go on. What is it, Kenneth?"

"Oh, nothing," he replied with an abrupt change of manner. "Just take good care of your cold; and much as Mrs. Shipman's friendship means to us, don't wear yourself out at that luncheon of hers."

Kenneth said good-bye again, and this time went out. Jennie knew well that to give her that advice about her cold, which was hardly a cold at all, was not what had been in Kenneth's mind. Something was brooding — she was more certain than ever of this. The panic in which she had lived these many days grew suddenly more intense. There rushed into her a resistless need of talking her situation over with some one — at once; mere words would be a relief, even if her way was not cleared.

And then she realized that of all her many friends of the great world there were none with whom she dared talk over such a matter as this: certainly not with Mrs. Shipman, and not even with Sue and Mrs. Harrison. Amid all the glory she had won she felt completely isolated; and thus cut off, her mind went homing back to the person who was most concerned in her success — her father.

Yes, she had to see her father! She considered when and how and where she should meet him. There was the luncheon, her last affair of the season, Mrs. Shipman was giving to the brides of the past year; that would last until three at least. And then at half-past three Mrs. Harrison and Sue were coming in to talk over summer plans. She liked them too well, and too much was builded upon them, for her to cancel that engagement; they would stay until probably five. From five until half-past six — half-past six was Kenneth's regular time for coming home — that was the period for seeing her father.

But where? A daring inspiration came to her: why not have him visit her here? Wherever she saw him there would be the element of risk always attending their meetings, and that risk would be hardly greater here than elsewhere. It could be easily managed. After thinking a few minutes she had Uncle George on the wire and, talking to him in code, arranged that Black Jerry was to come at five that afternoon in the guise of a cabinet-maker, to mend a refractory drawer of a writing-desk in her private sitting-room.

Mrs. Shipman's "brides' luncheon" was a very splendid affair; it had the distinction which characterized all of Mrs. Shipman's functions. And Jennie, despite her



long mental strain, was at her best; perhaps the feverish tensivity under which she had been living was responsible for her high spirits that afternoon.

At the end of the affair Mrs. Shipman whispered in the half-humorous, yet serious tone which was characteristic of that lady when she was with those whom she liked:

"My dear, I envy you. Of all the younger generation of women you are the one born to do things. I hope I shall be alive a few years from now, a nice, retired old lady, to watch you managing affairs."

"Oh, Mrs. Shipman," exclaimed Jennie, "you can't really mean that!"

"But I do, my dear," and there was undeniable conviction in Mrs. Shipman's voice. "You are going to do great things. Good-bye — until we meet in the country."

As Jennie went away dazed by this approval a footman handed her a box. This she opened in her car. It contained a few deep-red roses — in money value they meant almost nothing — and an unsealed envelope. From the last she drew a sheet of paper on which was written these few lines:

Let me say good-bye, too. You have done all I thought you might possibly do. You have proved that you are the sort of wife I talked about that night — the wife who can make her husband a great man. You are doing that to your husband. I congratulate you, and I am glad that it is my privilege to be

Your friend

DANIEL SHIPMAN

Mrs. Shipman's parting words, this note from Mr. Shipman, so thrilled Jennie that for the time she forgot

other matters. Never did this world seem so desirable, never did her pathway seem to be leading forward to such a glorious and widening future. There would have to be maneuverings, jugglings, struggles — but she would hold on to it!

Afterwards, when she was at home with Mrs. Harrison and Sue, it seemed that their whole-hearted affection for her would not permit them to leave. Jennie furtively glanced at her watch. The hands crept around toward five; her uneasiness grew, but she could hardly send them away; and they were still there when the butler announced the arrival of the cabinet-maker.

She hesitated; then said with forced calm: "Send him in, Martin. I'll show him what the work is."

A moment later Black Jerry was ushered in by the English butler. Black Jerry's dress was the usual one of artisans — he wore the common celluloid collar with a buttoned-on bow tie; and he held the usual scuffed leather bag in which skilled workmen carry their tools. His dark face was impassive.

"This way, please," Jennie ordered. Black Jerry, sidling along the great Italianesque fireplace, crossed the big living-room to the door which Jennie opened. "It's the lower left drawer to that desk which you are to fix," she continued in her even voice; and closing the door she returned to her guests.

"Did you really notice him, Jennie?" whispered Sue. "What a grim, shuddery-looking man!"

"Just so he does the work, I don't care what he looks like," Jennie returned carelessly.

Fifteen minutes later her visitors finally did depart, and Jennie slipped into the sitting-room. Her father rose from the chair in which he had been waiting.

"Dad!" she breathed. "Dad!"

"Jennie," he gulped; and then: "There's no danger of your husband coming in on us?" he asked.

"No. Kenneth never comes home before half-past six."

Black Jerry glanced about the sitting-room. "I never saw your home before. You've sure got a swell place, Jennie" — exultingly — "the swellest home I've ever been in!"

Then his tone changed. "Well, I'm here, Jennie. What's the trouble?"

The elation which had sustained her during and after Mrs. Shipman's luncheon, had now left her. "Everything, perhaps — nothing, perhaps. I felt I just had to see you. I don't know what's the matter, dad — I was never nervous like this before."

"It's not about Harry Edwards?"

"No, dad."

"That's right. What you decided was O.K. — it made me glad. If Harry Edwards wanted to make a fool out of himself and throw away his chance, that's his business. It ain't your business to throw away your chance."

"Dad — this is n't what I asked you here for — but is there anything new in Harry's case?"

"It still stands just like Uncle George said. It's all his own fault, though. But if it ain't because of Harry Edwards that you sent for me, then what is it?"

"I'm just plain nervous, dad. I — I seem to have gone to pieces. I simply had to talk to some one!" It had always been difficult for these two to be outspoken in their feeling, but the strain of her situation compelled an unhesitating directness. "From what you've done

for me, dad, I know I mean more to you than any one else — and you're the closest person to me in the world. Since I had to talk with some one, I simply had to talk with you. It's — it's about Kenneth, dad."

"Kenneth?" His voice, though a whisper, was a menacing growl. "What's he been doing?"

"Nothing. Only for some time he's been acting — well — very queer."

"In what way?"

"All I know is the way he has looked at me when he thought I was n't looking. His face was strained; his eyes were penetrating, questioning. I've thought that he half suspected — perhaps actually knew."

"Jennie — you're not really serious?"

"I'm serious in the way I feel — though I can't tell what he suspects or knows. But that has always been the danger, that he might sometime find out."

"And if he did find out," demanded Jerry, "what would he do?"

"He's very proud, dad, and very ambitious. I'm sure it would be the end of things between us. He'd throw me out. I can't tell you how sick I am thinking of that. And if he does, what am I ever to do?"

"If he does," — Jerry's big chest heaved and he ventured to take her hand, — "if he does, I'll still be backing you! But the chances are you're all wrong. You're going to stick right to the job, and keep on playing the game to the finish!"

"Of course I am, dad!"

"That's right. And this nervousness of yours will wear off, you see!"

He spoke on reassuringly, his dark, hungry eyes on her face, still holding the hand he had dared take. His

gruff, definite words were deeply comforting to her; for a few moments her spirit rested against the rugged strength of his; such support and comfort were what she had hungered for in the mood which had possessed her these many days. In these moments there was a strong reflux of her courage and confidence; once more she began to feel her accustomed strength to meet and handle any situation.

And then she heard a noise at the door, which was behind her, but which her father faced. She turned quickly; and as she turned she felt something wrenched from her wrist. Halted in the doorway was Kenneth.

For that instant Jennie was aghast as never before. She seemed to swirl downward — dizzily downward.

The hush was sickeningly long to Jennie as she gazed at the staring Kenneth, but in reality it lasted for only the briefest instant. Black Jerry broke the silence.

"Well, you think you've got me, don't you?" he snarled defiantly at Kenneth. He reached for his hip pocket, but his hand came back empty. "Hell — I forgot my gat! I suppose you really have got me, then. This is all I've pinched so far." He tossed upon the table the jeweled watch he had just torn from Jennie's wrist. "Well," he demanded, "what're you going to do with me?"

While he spoke, lost though she was, Jennie grasped her father's swiftly conceived purpose. To save her he was trying to explain his presence here by passing himself off as a burglar. His reaching for a pistol she recognized as merely a bit of stage-play to add color and plausibility to his impersonation; she knew her father always went unarmed.

"How did he get in here, Jennie?" asked Kenneth.



"As a cabinet-maker, to fix my desk," Jennie explained, falling in with her father's ruse, though still in a daze. Her father, passing himself off as a thief to save her in this desperate crisis! — she could not let him suffer for it. Her love for him rushed to the rescue — as far as it dared. "But that watch is really all he got thus far. I wish you would n't send him to jail, Kenneth, if you can feel that you don't have to."

"Why not?" asked Kenneth.

She had been in tight situations before, but none quite so tight as this. She was taut with suspense, but she managed to speak with no more than the quick breathing and the nervousness natural to one who has just been the victim of a burglarious assault.

"If he were arrested," she replied, "there'd be a police-court trial — and I'd have to be in it — and, Kenneth, I'd rather not be mixed up in a messy police-court affair. I'm sure if you gave him a sharp talking to and then let him go, it would be better for us."

"What have you got to say?" Kenneth asked Black Jerry.

"What's the use of my saying anything?" Jerry responded gruffly. "What you say is all that counts."

"I yield to my wife's request," said Kenneth. "I'll let you off."

Jennie's relief was as vast and sudden as had been her suspense. They were safe! They had saved the situation!

And then —

And then Kenneth closed the door, and stepped into the room. He faced Black Jerry:

"Your voice seemed familiar. But I did n't place it at first."

"My voice?" queried Jerry.

"I place it now," said Kenneth. "Remember that night out at Silver Bluffs when you played with my windpipe? You said you were Jennie's cousin."

"Don't remember anything about any such time. But I'm not her cousin."

The strange, drawn look Jennie had worried over in Kenneth's face was now no longer there; his face was working. His next words came out as a sharp explosion.

"I know you're not! You're her father!"

"I'm not!" Jerry cried huskily.

"My father!" breathed Jennie.

Kenneth turned upon Jennie. And then the possible danger that had been hidden in the heart of all these years — the fear that had eaten her soul all these weeks and days — suddenly burst into all the terrors of actuality. The heavens opened, and all they sustained and contained, crashed down upon her.

"Yes, your father — Black Jerry Malone!" Kenneth said rapidly, his words fairly snapping into her very face with feverish distinctness. "And you're Jennie Malone — you were never anybody else! And I know you used to be clever at forging — and I know about your trial — and that you ran away to escape sentence for forgery!"

Jennie swayed and would have fallen had not a blindly outstretched hand gripped the back of a chair. She stared with wide eyes at Kenneth. So — the very end had come! The end to all her years of striving — to her dreams and her father's dreams — and she was falling dizzily down — down — down — from her brilliant pinnacle! All, all was over!

She did not speak. Dazedly, limply, she waited for

the furious denunciation which she had known would be her portion if ever this moment came.

But there came no tongue-lashing — there fell no furious blow. Jennie caught her breath. Bewildered, she gazed at Kenneth; he gazed back at her, panting a bit, his eyes agleam with a new excitement of which she now for the first time became aware.

For a moment there was complete silence. Then Black Jerry pushed squarely up in front of Kenneth.

"If you try anything on my Jennie," he growled, "I'll twist that neck of yours the same as I said I would!"

"Father, don't!" breathed Jennie. "What's the use?" And then to Kenneth: "Yes, I've known for a long time that you either knew or else suspected."

"But I have not!" he exclaimed.

"No?" she cried incredulously. "But the strange way you looked at me these weeks —"

"Ask your father to go, Jennie," Kenneth interrupted. "There's a lot I want to say to you."

"Since you know who Jennie is, and all that's all over, I stick right here so long as she needs me," Black Jerry replied.

"All right, then," said Kenneth in a hurried, eager tone, turning away from Black Jerry. "Jennie, I never dreamed that you were anything except what I'd always supposed — not until to-day."

"No! But — but the strange looks I saw —"

"Listen, Jennie!" He spoke with a rapidity and a feverish agitation she had never in all her acquaintance with him known the self-controlled Kenneth to show. "If you saw a strange look, it was because I was wondering what *you'd do* when you learned the truth!"

"What *I'd do!*" she exclaimed.

"Jennie, I've been living in hell!" he went on rapidly, heedless of Black Jerry — and what was now amazing her most was a pleading tone that had come into his voice. "You know a little about my fooling with war stocks, but you have no idea how deep I've gone into them. I've put in everything I had — and more! It was the chance of a lifetime to make a big killing — to come out of it established forever as one of the big men who count. I went into it on margins, Jennie — and once started I had to keep on or I'd have been wiped out. Besides, I'm sure to clean up big in the end. Sure! So when my money was all gone — I began to use Shipman's money to cover my margins. But the market did n't rise, and I was every day afraid that I'd be found out — that's why I looked that way at you."

"Oh!" Jennie breathed faintly.

"And to-day I got a tip that the bank examiners would probably be around to-morrow," he went on with mounting excitement. "I'm up against it, Jennie! I've got to make good by to-morrow what I've used — or — or — you understand! You're the only person who can save me!"

"I?" she cried in amazement.

"Yes, only you, Jennie! The idea came to me this afternoon after I had learned who you really were." He drew several slips of paper from an inner pocket, and his words tumbled on. "These are Harrison and Company checks — the extra ones for use in case any are spoiled. We're holding a lot of money in our bank that we won't have to use for a month or two. I've made out one of these checks for fifty thousand and signed it as

treasurer — you know, I'm still treasurer there — but it's got to be countersigned by my father as president. If that check has my father's signature, I can get the money to straighten out my accounts in the morning over at Shipman's. And then I'll make my clean-up — the market is absolutely sure to turn right in a few days or a week or two! — and then I'll deposit the fifty thousand back into the account of Harrison and Company before it's missed and everything will be all right! All I ask of you, Jennie, is just to sign my father's name. Here's a sample of his signature. It looks hard — I could n't do it — but for you it will be easy! Jennie, you'll do it for me, won't you?"

Tense, eyes agleam with suspense, he awaited her answer.

"Kenneth!" she breathed, staring. She was utterly dumbfounded by this turn of events. She had feared so long this day and its denunciation. And now, exposure had come — and instead of denunciation, of being cast into outer darkness, here was Kenneth pleading that she should forge for his sake! The contrast was too astounding; for the moment her brain could not function.

"Don't you see, Jennie," he argued feverishly — "all that it amounts to is that I have borrowed from Shipman, and that I'll just be borrowing from my own firm to pay Shipman, and that in a short time I can square things with my own firm. That's all there is to it — just borrowing!" He pushed her, unresisting, down into the chair at her writing-table, and laid the checks before her. "And here — I brought along one of the pens my father always uses. And here's some blank paper; just practice his signature a few times."



Black Jerry, who had remained silent and aside during all this, now stepped forward.

"Hold on, Jennie," he ordered. He fixed his dark eyes on Kenneth. "You, young man, you ain't said yet what you're going to do about Jennie. Before Jennie goes ahead, we want a few words from you on that point. I ain't just got your number yet. Are you going to tell what you learned about her and throw Jennie down? Or are you going to keep still and stand by her?"

"Stand by her, of course!" cried Kenneth. "To expose her and start talk — I guess you can see that would n't help me a lot. Hurry up, Jennie!"

"Hold on," Black Jerry repeated, his dark eyes still on Kenneth. He considered an instant. In Black Jerry's mind, true product of his world, there was little concern over those details of human conduct which laws denominate as crimes — though Jerry, as conduct went among his fellows, had really been a very law-abiding citizen. A more important consideration than law, according to Jerry's code, was doing what was right and square by one's friends.

"You'd better understand what's behind this business," he said with his grim, ferocious pride. "I felt my Jennie had a right to as big a chance as any other girl. So I fixed things to give her that chance. And she's made good all right; woman to woman, there's no woman in her class. She deserves to be up where she is. So if you don't stand by her, I'll get you — don't you forget that! Go ahead, Jennie."

Jennie's chief sense was that of escape when escape had seemed impossible. Her relief was too vast for her to have thought of what she had been asked to do or of its consequences. She took the pen from Kenneth

and mechanically began to copy the signature of the elder Harrison upon the practice sheet. Kenneth watched her, wiping his face, in his manner the nervous relief of one who has won salvation; Jerry eyed, now Kenneth, now her. The room was still save for the breathing of the three. Jennie's hand grew more steady; the natural skill which had been hers when long ago she had forged that Morrison check, and which had been hers more recently when she had successfully imitated Gloria's handwriting, now returned to her. When Kenneth placed before her the check already filled out and signed by him, she wrote "James Harrison" as well as Kenneth's father could have done it himself.

"There!" she breathed, pushing the check toward Kenneth.

He seized it. "Thank God!" he cried. "Jennie — you'll never know what you've done for me!"

"You'd better remember, and keep on remembering!" put in Black Jerry, his dark, lowering face clenched with menace. "And also you'd better remember to treat my Jennie square — or you'll get what's coming to you." Abruptly he picked up his cabinet-maker's bag. "So-long," he said, and walked out of the room.

Jennie had swayed to her feet, unconsciously holding on to the pen. Kenneth caught her other hand.

"You'll never know what you've done for me, Jennie!" he repeated excitedly — this strange new Kenneth. "You've saved me! And everything's coming out all right — there'll be no trouble — and I'll clean up a fortune — and we'll keep on going up and up! And it'll all be your doing, Jennie — all your doing!"

"You — really — think so?" Her words were mechanical.

"You've done it all — you've saved everything! . . . But — but — Jennie, don't think I don't appreciate it if I run away and leave you. I promised to see my broker this evening before dinner, and I've simply got to go."

The next moment she was alone. She sank weakly into a chair, still holding the pen, almost in a state of collapse. She had escaped! She was safe! The future was still her own!

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

**O**UT at Silver Bluffs — she and Kenneth had gone there two days later — there followed a breathing space for Jennie, in which she strove to readjust herself to the new conditions, to the new possibilities, of her life. Kenneth knew — and she was still not cast out: the danger was over! Even after days this hardly seemed a reality.

She thought very little of her act of signing "James Harrison" to that check. Even if she had, enough of the cynical attitude of her girlhood lingered in her to have caused her conscience to consider it as a deed that was not particularly wrong. But as matters stood, in the emotional tumult in which she was hourly living, that act was an almost forgotten detail of a scene whose all-important fact was that Kenneth had not cast her from her lofty height.

But there were two matters about which she did think and wonder — at least a little. One of these was Kenneth himself: of the strangely different figure from the insouciantly competent Kenneth which he had in a flash revealed himself to be: of his feverish eagerness in asking her to forge to save him — of his financial entanglements. Somehow, though still Kenneth, he was not quite the wonderful Kenneth he had seemed to her school-girl eyes — not quite the same Kenneth he had seemed that summer's afternoon when, out on the landing here at Silver Bluffs, his proposal had burst upon her as a sudden and up-sweeping glory. She had

flitting moments of uneasiness. More than once there returned to her snatches of Slim Jackson's phrases. . . . "No difficulty about getting divorce . . . plenty of evidence . . . I myself can slip it right into your hand."

She did not believe what had been said and implied by Slim; for she knew Slim would stop at no lie that would serve him. But in flashes she was ever wondering about Kenneth . . . wondering very much.

And the second matter to which she gave real thought was, who had told Kenneth her secret? She surmised that it had been Slim Jackson. One evening at Silver Bluffs she put the question to Kenneth point-blank.

"I can't say who told me," he answered. "There were circumstances — well, I promised not to tell."

"Was it Jackson Holt?" she demanded.

"It was not Jackson Holt; that much I can definitely answer you," he replied. "Jackson Holt has never let fall a single word that would make me suspect that you were anybody except just exactly who I thought you were. But don't worry your head about that, Jennie. It's all the same to me, and you ought to be able to see that I'll do everything I can to keep the matter secret — that I don't want it to become public any more than you do."

She believed what he said about Slim Jackson. But if Slim had not told, then who was the person?

Aside from the effects of her shock, and aside from her secret thoughts, that May was a wonderful May to Jennie. Mrs. Shipman had a summer place not far from Silver Bluffs, and she, and those of the summer colony who circled about that great lady, had never been more cordial. And so it came about that Jennie's old-time confidence, so disturbed with fear for many weeks, re-



turned to her — and returned to her stronger than ever. She now had no secrets from Kenneth. She had passed the crisis — she was indeed going up, up, solidly up — no doubt of it!

Early in June she went into the city one afternoon with Mrs. Shipman to attend a meeting of women, some of whom lived up in Westchester County, to discuss a proposed open-air carnival and pageant to be given for Allied war relief upon the grounds of whatever summer home seemed most suitable. This conference ended, Jennie went to her empty apartment to wait for Kenneth, who was to meet her there and take her out to dinner.

She had an hour or more to herself — something which she had not really had for many, many weeks. The silence of the apartment, the covered furniture, infected her with loneliness. Sitting at a window giving upon the broad Avenue, her relaxed mind began to wander — then it drifted back and considered the long, long way she had traveled, the heights she had so patiently and daringly and brilliantly climbed — then it dwelt upon those who had been so close to her, in her other world.

Obedying an impulse — there was nothing to stay her, since she was alone — she called up Uncle George. He was at home.

“How’s dad?” she asked.

“Jerry? Jerry’s the same as ever. Going great,” was the old man’s hearty response.

“And — and Harry?”

“Same as ever. Not batting an eyelash.”

They talked of other matters — briefly; then she hung up. Yes, the old life was somehow far, far away.

And yet she felt it was somehow very near to her — and some elements very, very dear . . .

She had changed into an evening gown and was absently examining her slender, rounded lines in one of the two tall mirrors which, set into the wall, flanked either side of the great fireplace of the living-room, when Kenneth entered.

"I say, Jennie, you're looking stunning!" he called at sight of her. "You'll show 'em all up as second-raters at that little dinner to-night!"

Jennie was fully aware how well she looked. "It's half-past six, Kenneth; you'd better get dressed," was her only response.

"All right. Only I'm hot and fagged — I've got to have a high-ball before I can lift my hand to tie a neck-tie." In the doorway which led back to the kitchen and the pantry he paused. "By the way, just as I was leaving father called up and said he had to see me at once, so I told him to show up here before seven."

"What does he want?"

"He did n't say — except that it was important. He'll be along almost any minute."

Kenneth passed out and went about the business of mixing his drink. Presently the apartment bell rang, and Jennie admitted her father-in-law. He kissed her, but she sensed instantly that it was a mechanical kiss.

"Where's Kenneth?" he asked.

"He'll be right out," she answered.

By this time they were in the big living-room where the light was better. She gave a quick look at her father-in-law's face. That set, square, masklike, rather heavy face, which from the time she had first seen him had struck her as being a sort of composite face of all

the pictures she had seen in the magazines of the men who direct large affairs, was now plainly controlling some feeling or purpose only by a very great effort.

"It's very warm — can't I get you something to drink?" she asked.

"Don't want anything to drink!" he snapped at her. And then: "I beg pardon, Jennie — I did n't mean to be rough. It's just that something's on my mind."

He kissed her again, and this time his kiss was not perfunctory. Though he had disapproved of Kenneth's marriage, he had since admitted, at least to his very private self, that his wife had been right, that Jennie had, indeed, been just the wife for Kenneth. He had observed; and the way Jennie had carried Kenneth up had wrought this complete reversal in his attitude.

Kenneth came in carrying a tall, cool-looking glass. "Hello, father. Can I mix one for you?"

"Have n't time for a drink."

"All right. Excuse me while I say a few kind words to my stomach."

He had the glass at his lips and was tilting down its contents when the elder Harrison exploded. He jerked a paper from out his inside coat pocket and flung it upon the great carved table.

"Look at that, damn you!" he cried. "Look at that, and then let's hear what's your explanation!"

Kenneth's glass slipped away from his lips so abruptly that some of the icy mixture splashed down upon his collar. "Hello, what's wrong?"

The elder Harrison held a blunt forefinger on the paper and glared at his son. "Look at that!" he almost shouted.

Kenneth looked at what had been flung so furiously

upon the table. His handsome face suddenly went white. With an effort he raised his eyes to his father's.

"Well — well —" And there his husky voice stopped.

"Well — go on!" the older man roared.

But Kenneth did not go on; seemingly he was unable to go on. For the first instant Jennie was quite bewildered by this swift outburst of father upon son, by the furious glare of the one and the pale, twitching face of the other; but as the moments passed and the gaze of each gripped the other in a tense silence, she dropped her eyes to what was beneath Mr. Harrison's forefinger. At first the paper had no meaning to her. Then dimly she began to remember — then she drew a sharp breath.

The paper was that check to which, a few weeks since, Kenneth had asked her to forge his father's signature in order to save him.

"Go on — speak out!" the older Harrison shouted at Kenneth. And as Kenneth still did not speak, Mr. Harrison went on himself — and his words were molten fury. "You know what it is! And you know I know what it is! It is a damnable forgery! You know I did n't sign my name to that!"

The older man's fury was now almost beyond all control. "God — you crook, you! Have n't you tried to put across enough slippery tricks? Have n't I pulled you out of enough trouble for you to learn any sense? And yet you try still another stunt — forgery! I did n't know you could forge — but I should have known that you'd have your try at every crooked stunt there is. You — you —" He ended with a gasping choke.

Jennie, eyes wide, stared at her husband. She did not consciously remember what Slim had said about him, but the substance of Slim's words must have been re-

uttering themselves in the ears of her subconscious self. She felt dizzy — sick.

"But — but — I don't know anything about that check," Kenneth responded in a thin, dry whisper.

"You lie! That other signature is your signature all right. But I know I never signed that check — though if I had n't been so certain I had not, I might have believed I did, for that forgery is a wonder. It's no use to lie and try to squirm out of it — I've had to cover you up too often to believe any of your lies!"

Kenneth wet his twitching, white lips. "The amount is n't really so big. Only fifty thousand. Take care of it for a little while, father — and I'll square it up. I promise. I've got big chances! Square it up and — and — keep it quiet!"

"You don't get this situation at all, you young fool!" raged the father. "I might square it. Fifty thousand is a lot of money, still I could manage it. But I can't keep it quiet. There's the big point: I can't keep it quiet!"

"You can't keep it quiet?" exclaimed Kenneth. "You can't keep it quiet? Why?"

"I did n't discover it. The audit company discovered this morning there was just fifty thousand dollars difference between our figures in our balance and the bank's figures, and they dug up this check. And they happened to tell three other men in the firm about it before they told me — and one of them is Mortimer. And Mortimer hates me worse than poison — he would n't pass by this chance to get a knife into me for a million dollars! Keep it quiet? The best I could get out of them was the loan of this check, under a guarantee, while I had the affair out with you. Keep it quiet? Young man, you've at



last mixed yourself in something that no human power can keep quiet!"

Kenneth was now supporting himself by leaning heavily on the table and clenching its edges with both hands. His terrified eyes were blinkingly on his father, but he did not speak. Jennie, a little to one side, watched the two men, waiting in a sickened amazement of soul.

The father burst out again in a fury that swept onward in a ferocious wave of passion — concentrated energy of a lifetime, unloosed in a moment. "Keep it quiet! When you say that, you are thinking only of what it may mean to *you*. Well, it can't be kept quiet! Do you know what that means to *me*? Do you know that I lowered your mother's social position by letting her marry me? Do you know that for thirty years and more I've been working day and night to win a place in business and out in life that would put me and my family on a level with the top people your mother used to mix with? God! how I've worked, and thought, and waited to establish myself and my family! And I've won out — or almost won out! And now, just as I've won in a big way, my son commits forgery — there'll be a big trial — it's a plain case — and he'll go to Sing Sing. You see now what that means to me? The idea of my whole life is smashed." He ripped out a terrible oath; Jennie had never heard her father, even in his most furious moment, swear with such driving, uncontrolled violence. "You slippery, worthless hound, that I've tried so hard to make a man of — I ought to beat your head in!"

Still, Kenneth, pale, gripping the table, eyes on his father, made no response.

Mr. Harrison's fury raged on. "A few years in Sing Sing might be a good thing for you, if that was all there was to it. But think of what it means to my life-work — think of what it means to my family! And you've had every chance in the world that we could give you. And your wife — she's developed into a wonder for you!" He turned upon Jennie. "Jennie, I guess you know I objected to you at first, but I want to apologize. What you've done to put him forward is a miracle! If he'd had the right stuff in him there's no place so high that you could n't have landed him in it. But as it is, you're just one more he's dragged down, Jennie!"

Jennie, though she had heard, did not reply. When Mr. Harrison had turned to her and spoken her name, she had seen Kenneth's gaze, which all the while had been fearfully upon his father, shift to her face. He was now staring at her and a curious look was dawning in his eyes. Jennie perceived this; she could not anticipate what this look could mean; but a new quiver went through her weakened body.

"Well, is n't there anything you can say for yourself?" the frenzied father demanded.

"I — I — perhaps — you see —" Kenneth's incoherent words were barely audible whispers. "You say — it can't be kept quiet? — and I'll go to Sing Sing?"

"I certainly said so! But your going to Sing Sing won't pain me much!"

Kenneth's strange gaze was still on Jennie; only now there was purpose in it. He ran his tongue between his dry lips.

"Since the situation is — is as desperate as you say it is, then, perhaps, for your sake, for mother's and Sue's sake, if not for my own, I ought to tell you some-

thing I've known for several weeks. But something I — I hoped I'd never have to tell."

"Out with it if you have anything to say!" his father snapped.

"It's — it's about Jennie."

"About Jennie!" exclaimed Mr. Harrison.

"About — about me?" whispered Jennie.

Kenneth had now turned his eyes back to his father. "About Jennie, yes. I only learned it a few weeks ago, and I never intended to breathe it to a soul — but — but this changes things. Her name never was Jennie Miller — she never lived in the West — she never was an orphan. Her name was Jennie Malone — her father is a well-known figure in the tough part of downtown and he was once on trial for a double murder — you've heard of him, he's Black Jerry Malone — and Jennie disappeared from her old life following her arrest on the charge of forgery, and she is now a fugitive from justice. For years, her whole life has been just make-believe."

Mr. Harrison had wheeled upon Jennie during this speech and had noted the change in her face. "My God!" he breathed. "Jennie — is this true?"

Jennie had no words.

"If it is true, Kenneth," demanded the older man, "how did you find it out?"

"Gloria Raymond telephoned me one day that she wanted to see me about an investment and came down to the office. She really wanted to see me about Jennie. She and Jennie have been enemies since they first met, and Gloria made it her business to look into Jennie's past. She did so, and she told me what I've just told you."

For all her dizziness, her sense of a whirling, crashing world, Jennie was sharply conscious of one thing. Gloria Raymond had made good on her threat!

"Is that true, Jennie?" Mr. Harrison demanded once more.

Whatever else she might do, denial was futile. So Jennie slowly nodded her head.

"My God!" Mr. Harrison breathed again.

"And about that check," Kenneth continued — "it is exactly as I said. I know nothing at all about it. But I have a surmise. You know we are careful of the Harrison and Company blank checks, but quite by accident a few loose checks were among some papers I brought home several weeks ago for careful examination and which I kept here for some days. Jennie is an expert forger; she is now a fugitive from justice for forgery. It is plain she must have abstracted one of those checks, forged your name, and mine also. What she did with the money I cannot say; my opinion, though, is that some one may have been blackmailing her. This is the only possible explanation I can see of the affair."

Jennie's eyes, as she swayed against the table, grew yet more wide as Kenneth made this statement. Almost unconsciously to herself during the past weeks she had been undergoing a disillusionment in regard to Kenneth; but now her disillusionment was conscious and complete. His soul was revealed starkly. The handsome, popular Kenneth, who had so fascinated her by his distinguished exterior, was a coward, a sneak, a traitor.

"It's a lie, Mr. Harrison," whispered Jennie. "That part is a lie!"

"You're a damned dog, Kenneth!" his father blurted out. "I don't believe a word of it!"

"Yes, it's a lie, Mr. Harrison," Jennie went on rapidly, brokenly. "I did forge your name — that much is true. But Kenneth told me he was in terrible trouble — that he was about to be found out and disgraced — he said I alone could save him — he had to have money — he begged me to forge your name. He had already signed his name. And I did what he asked — because he begged me — because he said that would save him! That's the God's truth, Mr. Harrison!"

Kenneth's white face, though it twitched, was tense with purpose. "That's Jennie's story, father. It's for you to decide whether you want to believe her story, and have me disgraced, which does n't count for so much — but to have the work and ambition of your lifetime ruined, and to have our family destroyed. Or whether you want to accept my explanation, which will save you, the family, all of us, and which will place the blame where it belongs — upon an adventuress who has unfortunately imposed upon all of us, and who already has a record as a forger."

"Why — why — my God, Kenneth!" she breathed.

She was appalled. It was so clever, so cunning, so plausible, this swiftly and desperately invented explanation of Kenneth's. She had been weak before, but now her strength entirely left her, and she sank into a chair beside the table and gazed whitely at son and father, hardly able to think in this chaos which had so suddenly enveloped her. The two men were looking at each other fixedly, the older man's heavy eyebrows drawn down, his eyes piercing. His eyes



shifted to Jennie, then back to Kenneth, then rested on Jennie.

"You have just two hours in which to try to escape," he announced.

Galvanically she came to her feet. "What! You don't believe Kenneth!"

"Of course I believe Kenneth," he said.

Jennie saw that Kenneth's adroit appeal to his father's essential worldliness had been in every way a success; she saw that Mr. Harrison did not believe it, but that he perceived in Kenneth's explanation that chance to save himself and his family which Kenneth had so cunningly pointed out. His gray eyes grew hard and regarded her with indomitable purpose, his voice became crisp and harsh.

"You'd better hurry," he advised. "I'd rather have you escape than for us all to be dragged through a trial. And to make you hurry I'll tell you exactly what our course will be. I shall notify police headquarters of my discovery in just two hours. I shall tell them, and we shall tell in court, if it ever gets to court, exactly what Kenneth has told me — and you, with a charge of forgery already hanging over you, won't have a chance. Every detail of your past will substantiate our statements. And to-morrow I shall further clear ourselves of you by beginning suit for the annulment of Kenneth's marriage on the grounds of deception practiced upon him. And we'll get that decree. I tell you you don't have a chance. So get away from here — quick!"

"You — you would n't do that?" whispered Jennie.

"I shall — and I can put it all through!" was the dominant reply. "You've got just two hours!"

For a moment Jennie's eyes rested upon the two

men — upon the granite face of Mr. Harrison, who had seen a way out, and upon the greenish-white face of Kenneth, who was again nervously licking his thin lips — a face that now, stripped of its fascination, seemed only selfish and weak and treacherous. She might have struck back at them with contemptuous words — but words of any kind she knew would neither change them nor help her. She knew that exactly what Mr. Harrison said, that he could and would do; she was trapped completely — and trapped all the more hopelessly because she had helped trap herself. For the moment all the spirit of fight, which had been so essential an element of the Jennie who used to be, was gone utterly out of her.

In silence she passed the two men and entered her suite and thence passed into her dressing-room. With weak hands she removed her few jewels, then she unfastened her gown of thinnest chiffon — in which smoldered fires which would flame brilliantly out as she walked and as suddenly recede into a soft glow. The gown slipped from her figure to the floor, and she stepped outside its filmy circle. For a moment she gazed down upon its deflated beauty; she had admired it more than any evening gown she had ever owned. It was to her the concrete symbol of all she had fought for, and won, and lost. Looking down upon those few ounces of silk, she realized, even more poignantly than a few moments earlier when face to face with those two determined men, that the end had come. Yes, at last the end had come — the end to all glory, all dreams, all hopes . . .

She changed quickly into a plain suit, of a finer texture and a better make, but otherwise not very different from the serge suit in which five years before she had

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fled out of her old world. Snatching a veil, she passed out through the living-room; the men were no longer there; and two minutes later she was down in the street. And thus in her simple dark suit she hurried away out of her glorious new world to — She did not know to where. She had no plans. She had only the instinct to escape.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### JENNIE SEEKS SANCTUARY

**B**UT presently as she hurried on, avoiding policemen whenever she saw one idly swinging his night-stick, Jennie began to think of what she should do. She needed help — advice — refuge.

At first her impulse was to fly back to her father — to the Pekin — back to her other world. But almost instantly she recognized that that procedure would not be a wise one: the police, searching for Black Jerry's daughter, would first of all search Black Jerry's home; further, she would be merely walking into danger were she to ask her father to come to her aid. She turned next to the other person who had tried to plan her destiny — Uncle George.

It was still only a little past seven. She remembered that Uncle George usually dined late, and always dressed elaborately for dinner. She slipped into a telephone booth in a Madison Avenue drug-store and called his apartment. As she had calculated, he was in. Using the code they had developed she told him she needed him desperately, and if he could help her he should come to her instantly dressed in inconspicuous garments. He promptly replied that she should be waiting for him in fifteen minutes at the northern end of the Mall in Central Park.

She had been standing for hardly a minute at the head of the broad flight of stone steps that lead down to the fountain and the lake, when a closed car halted at the curb and the door swung open. Inside she saw

Uncle George, in sober garb, and she quickly stepped in and closed the door. "Around the Park, Jack," Uncle George said to the chauffeur; and then to Jennie: "What's the trouble, Jennie? Speak right out; no danger if the chauffeur does hear a word or two. He's safe; same one who drove us away from the Pekin all those years ago. Remember?"

Jennie glanced forward. Yes, the driver was the same man who had been at the wheel on that far-gone night when she had fled the world of her childhood.

Briefly she told Uncle George the situation. She told him everything — even that Slim had been the person who had been blackmailing her — even told of Slim's part in that Morrison check business of long ago.

Uncle George cursed her husband and her father-in-law with a sulphurous ferocity; it was rather startling to Jennie, for Uncle George was not given to swearing. "And to think," he raged, "that this has happened after you've climbed so high — after you'd done so much for your husband — after you seemed to have everything!"

With an effort he controlled himself. "No time to waste talking about that now, though. We've got to talk about what you're going to do. They certainly have got you for fair, Jennie! Nothing you or your father can say will count for a nickel; it won't be believed. They can put you away on that charge — no doubt of it. Well, it would be crazy to try to make a get-away now, for there'll be a general alarm out for you, all over town, all over the country, before you could even get fairly started. The thing to do is to hide until the thing blows over a bit, and they've given you up — and then try to get out of the country, say across into Canada."



They discussed ways and means — with the result that Jennie found herself following almost the same grooves in escaping her great world that she had followed in entering it. Uncle George, who instinctively prepared for emergencies, had brought a traveling-bag in the car. Half an hour later Jennie, her veil down, and looking just a limp, inconspicuous child, was standing once again at the desk of that most irreproachable hostelry for manless women, the Martha Washington, and Uncle George, again in his kindly voice which denoted the deacon, was saying:

“My niece is n’t feeling at all well, and a doctor I took her to when we reached town ordered her to stay in bed for several days. I’ve got to be going on to Boston — so that’s why I brought her here where I knew she’ll get the best of attention. I’ll send her around some more clothes to-morrow. From what I’ve heard, you always give the best of care to strangers.”

They did — and would. But despite that care, Jennie slept not at all that night. She lay gazing into the darkness of her austere room, thinking, wondering, fearing. What heights she had reached! And what a miserable ending her glory had come to! She wondered what was going to happen next — how it was all coming out . . .

The next morning, just as on her first morning here five years before, she looked with sickened eagerness at the papers which the maid brought her. There it all was! — forcing the war to share the first-page headlines with her. It was a sensation such as disillusioned and sensation-weary reporters get a chance at only once in every five years or so, and their typewriters had made the most of it. Jennie gasped when she read all the details set down in order and perpetuated in print. Nothing

was missed. The daughter of the notorious Black Jerry — the flight to escape punishment for forgery — her long and carefully planned residence as a student among the exclusive girls of Braithewood Hall — her marriage — her amazing social success — her complete deception of the socially supreme — and then in the end the truth of the old phrase that blood will tell, with her new incursion into the field of forgery, with the inevitable exposure — and now her second flight to escape justice. It was a wonderful romance! — particularly with the color and interpretation which she knew had emanated through careful suggestion from Kenneth and Mr. Harrison.

Why, all New York knew about her now and were talking about her! What were her high friends saying as they read this story — Mrs. Shipman and the others?

And Sue and Mrs. Harrison? She felt much more sick than Uncle George had represented her to be when she thought about them. They had always been so true and loyal and frank! — so genuine in their affection! But what were they thinking now?

And she thought of her father, dragged again from his sought-for obscurity into first-page prominence. He had tried so hard to help her, and this was the end of it all!

And the police? She shivered at every sound approaching her room. More and more such of her mind as was not possessed by fear, was concerned in Uncle George's plan to get her across into Canada. If she could only get into Canada!

She was thoroughly unnerved and frightened, and she became truly a sick young woman, as much so as if she had been prostrated with brain fever; sick with that unnerving and exhausting illness which is a combination of fear, suspense, and enforced inactivity.

In feverish flashes she looked back upon her glorious past, and what stood out most clearly in it was the figure of Kenneth. Cynical, bitter, and frightened, she raved into her pillow against him and against all those in the world he and she had inhabited. She recalled that Kenneth had said that Gloria was the one who had exposed her. But how had Gloria learned? From Slim Jackson, undoubtedly. She tried to reason out Slim's motives — but her surmises never satisfied her, and not till long after, and under very different circumstances, did she learn the truth.

The truth was really far from complex if one fully understood Slim's nature. That young gentleman, tingling to make Jennie suffer for her rebuff of him, had with peculiar cunning considered how he could gratify his desire for revenge and also make a profit by the same act. He had thought of telling Kenneth directly. That plan he had dismissed; it might injure Jennie, but it would not help him. Also such direct procedure might lead to unhappy eventualities with Black Jerry. He then had what he considered one of his inspirations. Gloria Raymond! He remembered how Gloria hated Jennie — how Jennie had been the instrument of ending Kenneth's infatuation for Gloria. By telling Gloria, making her swear to keep secret the source of her information, and allowing her to have the credit of exposing Jennie to Kenneth, he would be the winner on every count and he would place Gloria under eternal obligation to him. And after Gloria had acted, who knew what might not happen? One thing, though, seemed definite: sometime, somehow, he could collect upon that obligation.

And as Slim had planned, so had he done.

Uncle George had said that Jennie would not hear from him again until his plans were made and it was safe to try to execute them; this might possibly mean weeks. There now followed slow days and nights of this shivering illness which possessed her. During these days while Jennie waited, tossing about her bed, and ignorant of everything except that which she gathered from the daily papers, much was going on out in that great world which so lately had been her own. The proceedings for the annulment of her marriage to Kenneth had been formally instituted. Kenneth went about with the subdued, retiring manner of one who is stricken with public shame. He received much sympathy for his misfortune. There was a quiet meeting between him and Gloria, deftly arranged by Slim Jackson. Gloria was more than willing to see Kenneth; despite the notoriety brought upon him by his wife, he was a far more important and promising personage than he had been the summer before when she had so boldly gone man-hunting for him. At this meeting she easily convinced him that the letter which had caused the breach between them had been just another sample of Jennie's ability as a forger, and that the affair with Slim Jackson had been no more than a bit of a foolish girl's summer nonsense. It became understood between them that as soon as Kenneth was legally free, they were to be married.

Kenneth was mightily pleased at this prospect; despite his father having helped him out of his recent predicament, he saw that he was going to need money, and need it badly. Likewise, when Slim Jackson learned of this understanding, he was also mightily pleased. Matters were working out as he had hoped they would.

There was no doubt that he would be able to collect — and big! — for Gloria had endless money of her own.

As for Mrs. Harrison and Sue, this generous-hearted mother and daughter were bewildered and subdued; a hush had settled upon their lives. Naturally they were not told the truth, and they had to accept what everybody was accepting. And yet, remembering the unaggressive stages by which Jennie had risen, remembering how she had worked, remembering how simple she had always seemed, they could hardly believe what was being circulated as common knowledge. It could hardly seem possible of the Jennie they had known — and yet there were the facts!

And during these days while the town still talked of Jennie's story, and while the police were combing the city and the whole country for her, Black Jerry wore a blacker look than ever. He knew such facts as Uncle George had communicated to him, which, of course, were not all. He could hardly hold himself in check. In fact, all that restrained him from violent action was Uncle George's warning that unless Jerry exercised the greatest control, he would certainly ruin their chance of getting Jennie across into Canada — which was now the one hope for her that remained to them.

Early in these days of Jennie's hiding, an incident took place which, though it was not directly to influence Jennie's action, nevertheless was to intensify the motives of at least one person directly identified with her destiny. The day before Jennie had disappeared, Slim Jackson had closed his regular New York season, though prior to that he had announced that three weeks after closing he would put on a "revue" for the summer. Two days after the closing, Black Jerry had received by the



hand of a messenger a letter written upon the paper of a smart uptown hotel. The letter was written in a large, sprawling hand, and requested Jerry to call upon the writer at once. It was signed "Doris Dorraine." Jerry was well enough acquainted with stage affairs to know who "Doris Dorraine" was. He decided to go, but not knowing what might be afoot he decided it would be well to have a witness. So Uncle George went with him.

Doris Dorraine received them in her pink sitting-room, herself in a pink summer gown of imported linen. She was a slender, lissome blonde, with rings around her eyes — looking rather more tired and hard and sophisticated than a woman who was only twenty-five should look.

"I read what happened to your daughter," she said to Jerry, "and I think I can tell you some things that will interest you." Her grayish-green eyes, whose archly coquettish glance she had counted such an asset on the stage, were now alight with fury. She went straight to the heart of what she had to say, not bothering to give an explanation of why she was saying it. But for all her sophistication, she was a simple type and her motives were simple. When Slim Jackson, in his passionate appeal to Jennie to come with him, had said that he himself could get her the evidence necessary for a divorce, Slim was speaking the truth. One source from which he knew he could have secured it was his dancing partner. There had recently been an artfully concealed affair between Kenneth and Doris Dorraine, which Kenneth had abruptly broken off. And when Slim Jackson had ended his season, and she had asked about rehearsals for the "revue," Slim had told her that they were through as a dancing team, that she no longer had

the necessary class. Her vanity, her pride, knew only one desire — to strike back at both men as hard as she could; and she was using the method of striking natural to a woman of her type.

The sentences which poured from the unembarrassed lips of this widely advertised young beauty dealt with matters which are never set down in print intended for the public eye, and they shall not be recorded here. They had to do with the profligacies, the *abandon*, the inhumanities, which are hinted at in the newspapers when some celebrated murder or scandal makes the public shudderingly wonder just what does go on behind and beneath the brilliant surface of Broadway life: — that under life where bonds are loosed, where pleasure rules with unchallenged sovereignty, and where the sharers of pleasure (if they become tiresome, or inconvenient, or perhaps a menace) are made to vanish or meet inexplicable ends: — thus at least the papers hint.

But this very young woman did not hint; she spoke the unspeakable; and she spoke out of her own knowledge. What she said concerned chiefly Kenneth and Slim, and what each had done. And in connection with Kenneth she spoke specifically of a girl named Myrtle Freeman, whose disappearance four months back was still a police mystery. If what she said was the truth, then there was nothing at which Kenneth had stopped in his pursuit of self-gratification and nothing at which he had halted to avoid the consequences of exposure — and, despite her venomous hate, there was no doubting Doris Dorraine's credibility.

As for Slim Jackson, his secret record was just as dark; the chief difference being that Slim, while also a participant, had made great sums as entrepreneur and

business manager for this secret pleasure. Many a nice girl and pretty girl had Slim first fascinated by dancing with her in a public ballroom — and had then in the course of time introduced into the cast of his unadvertised performances. . . .

“God!” breathed Uncle George when they were out of the scented boudoir and down in the fresh air of the street; “that handsome son-in-law of yours is just about as rotten as they make ’em — even on Broadway! He ought to be sent to the chair about twelve separate times!”

“Oh, I’ll get him!” gritted Black Jerry, his dark eyes glittering with terrible purpose.

Uncle George understood. He put a quieting hand on Jerry’s arm. “No, you don’t, Jerry. Not that he does n’t deserve what you’re thinking about. But that would interfere with all our chances for getting Jennie away. We’ve got to think first of Jennie.”

“Jennie — my God!” Jerry said huskily. “All right — I’ll behave. But to think we thought we were doing fine by Jennie when our plans worked out so she married *that!*”

“Jerry,” Uncle George said meditatively, “it strikes me that there must have been something wrong with our plan from the start. But I can’t just see what it was.”

Black Jerry did not even hear this last remark. “Jennie!” he said with heaving chest. “Yes, I’ll hold back — but I’m going to put Casey wise to all the other things this young dame upstairs has told me that pair has been doing. Mebbe Casey can fasten something on them. Yes, I’ll hold back on Kenneth Harrison for Jennie’s sake. And I’ll hold back on Slim Jackson, too.”

Doris Dorraine had somehow learned that it had been Slim who had betrayed Jennie's secret to Gloria Raymond, and this fact had been one of the many items she had just recounted to the two men. "Slim Jackson slipping Jennie the double-cross!" He swore. "Oh, I'll get Slim Jackson, too!"

"But Jennie first," insisted Uncle George soothingly. "Remember, we started this mess — we're responsible — it's up to you and me to get Jennie out. Give me your hand on it, Jerry — it's got to be Jennie first!"

They had turned into a side street and had halted and were facing each other. Jerry's eyes were glowering balefully, his great chest was heaving mightily. But instantly he put his big hand into Uncle George's to seal the promise.

"Sure — Jennie first!" he agreed huskily.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### IN WHICH JENNIE AWAKES

THE days wore on. And silently the diverse elements of life which had affected and were still to affect the destiny of Jennie Malone, and the destinies of many other persons, went on gathering intensity for one of those supreme moments of energy which we, with our trained sense for theatricalism, term climaxes: though the only visible evidences of this activity were the continued search for Jennie, the proceedings for the annulment of her marriage, and a now open though subdued courtship between Gloria and Kenneth which every one understood was merely waiting for a deferred consummation.

These further days were for Jennie, up in her nun's room, just a repetition of the many days that had gone before. Her girlish face and figure lost some of their young roundness under the continued strain. She grew more sick with that sickness which arises chiefly from a festering soul. And even less was she able to think of any one else except as that person concerned her fate; and even less was she able to think of anything except what was to become of her. But before selfishness be urged too strongly against her, it must be remembered in her behalf that all the circumstances of her career had combined to make her self-centered, it must be remembered that she was still very young, and that Life — Life which she had thought she could manage so easily — that Life was not yet done with her. . . .

At last, when July had arrived, there came a break



in her solitude. Uncle George, again looking very much the kindly deacon, called upon her in her room — a privilege which was gained him in this semi-nunnery by his elderly years, his benevolent demeanor, and the understanding that Jennie was his niece. After the maid was gone and he had closed the door, he lost no word in coming to his business.

"Jennie, it's all settled. Things have quieted down in New York; the police have practically given you up. To-night we make your get-away."

"Oh, Uncle George!" she breathed.

"Here's how it's all doped out, Jennie — and everything is ready and waiting. This afternoon I call to take you out to a country sanitarium; an easy closed car; Jack will be driving, and you know how safe he is. But we're not going to run the risk of taking a train at any New York station; too many plain-clothes men watching them on general principles. We shoot you out of town to a place where I turn you over to an old lady named Ferguson — she's safe, and she'll be good to you, and you're to call her your aunt — and then Jack shoots you across the State line, and over into Connecticut. There you and Mrs. Ferguson catch the New England night express for Canada, and to-morrow morning you'll be eating a fine breakfast in Montreal. How's that?"

"Uncle George — safe in Canada!" was all she could say. "It's — it's simply wonderful, Uncle George!"

"Then pull yourself together and get ready. I've already told the jailer of this convent that I'm taking you away this afternoon. So I'll be showing up again in a couple of hours."

When he had gone, though she had nothing to do ex-

cept get dressed and she had two hours for that, Jennie nevertheless slipped out of bed and dressed with frenzied haste. After doing this, she had nothing to occupy her but her own thoughts, and her thoughts inevitably were all upon her immediate future. In less than twenty-four hours she would be safe — out of it all! The mere realization of this partially restored her strength, and partially restored that balance of mind which she had been lacking all the days she had been here.

Her fear, her nervousness, were almost entirely gone. Suspense she felt, of course. But she considered herself already safe. She knew Uncle George — knew that anything he put his brain to, and said he would achieve, was in reality already achieved. Yes, she was safe!

And then, while she was in the midst of her swift, exultant joy, she quite mechanically picked up a newspaper which Uncle George, not knowing that he had done it, had left behind. For a long time now — ever since her own story had first begun to fade in the papers and then had vanished from them altogether — Jennie had had no interest in newspapers, and had given the maid no further orders to bring them up to her. In consequence this paper Uncle George had forgotten was the first she had seen in almost two weeks.

She glanced at the front page, and suddenly halted at two words which comprised part of a black headline. The two words were "Harry Edwards." During the many days since she had fled from Kenneth and his father, in her egomaniacal, feverish fear, in her very real illness, her mind had merely touched Harry Edwards and then glanced off. But it was quite other now: she read with staring eyes, with sharp gasps.

The story did not tell her all, for it was the account

of what seemed to be the last day of Harry's trial. But what the paper did not tell, the previous installments of this murder serial, Jennie's mind easily supplied. Joseph Graves and John Pearson, those witnesses who were to have disappeared, had taken the stand and testified how Harry had killed Larry Murdock. Cross-examination by the defendant's counsel had only served to strengthen the credibility of these two witnesses. Sam Conway had taken the stand and had testified to having parted with Murdock on the fatal night after they had threshed out their differences and had become reconciled. About the murder he knew nothing at all. As for Harry, he had always liked him for his father's sake and had tried to help him; he grudgingly admitted that Harry was a bit hot-tempered and reckless — in fact, Conway's attitude was that of one who was trying to shield Harry, which was the most damaging attitude in its effect upon the jury that he could have taken. Harry's testimony had consisted chiefly of denial, unsupported by evidence, and he had been unable to explain or prove his whereabouts at the time the murder was committed. The reporter very skillfully conveyed the impression — as definite and conclusive as would have been a direct statement — that there was no doubt what the jury's verdict would be, and no doubt what would be the judge's sentence. The judge's attitude was well known; he was in favor of stamping out the thuggery, and all the gangster and gunman methods, which had crept into New York city politics; he would undoubtedly seize this chance of giving a clear warning to all evil elements by inflicting the extreme penalty.

Jennie slowly wilted down into a denim-covered mor-

ris chair, and sat there shivering, staring. There had been dramatic episodes in her career, she had played her part successfully in many a brilliant and trying scene. But the tensest drama of her life had been reserved for these present moments — and that great drama was to be enacted solely between the two persons she was, with no sensational setting and no breathless audience — just herself, all alone, huddled in a faded and worn hotel chair.

Safety was hers. To-morrow, and all would be well. And yet, if she chose safety, Harry . . . The alternatives were now much more sharply defined than when the case had been put before her weeks ago by her father and Uncle George. Then Harry's case had not been so desperate; at least, she had repeated to herself that something would develop, that somehow the matter would straighten itself out. And at that time her case had not been so desperate either. True, there was her brilliant career which then had been at stake — but great as that had seemed, it was not so important as her present safety.

It was a bitter fight that was fought out, in that little room, upon the stage of Jennie's soul. The issues were clear-cut. Either she went away to her certain safety and Harry went to his certain doom, or else she cleared Harry, and went shamefully to prison upon the forgery charge her husband and her father-in-law had made against her — and she knew she could expect no mercy from these two. There was no possible compromise — no halfway measure — no chance for bargaining. It was either definitely the one, or definitely the other.

Jennie never knew, and perhaps never will know, what was the thought or consideration that tilted her

wavering, struggling soul toward what was finally its decision. Perhaps it was the unconscious remembrance of Harry's frank, loyal blue eyes that day she had paid the stolen visit to him in the Tombs, when he had told her, since she did not love him, to live out her life in her own way, and had wished her the best of luck. But whatever it was that swayed her, long before Uncle George reappeared she suddenly crumpled up in the big chair and cried with a frantic, throaty sob:

"I'm going to give myself up — I'm going to help Harry! I — I don't care what happens to me!"



## CHAPTER XXXIX

### IN WHICH JENNIE'S DRAMA REACHES AN ANTI-CLIMAX

SHE kept on sobbing out her purpose while she waited for Uncle George to come. As she sobbed on, her determination became more fixed; an exaltation began to swell in her as in one who goes forth to sacrifice. And then she thought of something she might have done and that thought pricked her bubble of exaltation and made her suddenly view herself as small and shameful.

The sudden thought was that many weeks ago, when Uncle George and her father had first broached the matter of Harry's extremity, she might of her own accord, while still in a high station, have gone to the District Attorney's office, told the truth, exposed herself, and have established Harry's alibi. That would have been a fine thing to do — heroic and magnificent — to have given up voluntarily position and honor in order that justice might be done a man. That had been her big chance. Yes, that would have been a splendid thing to have done! Whatever else people might then have said about her, they would at least have said that she was a woman of courage and honor — something of a heroine in a way. But now — exposed — hunted — what a pitiable figure she would seem in all the world's eyes even if she did go to Harry's rescue!

Yes, she had missed her big chance. She was going to do in a poor way what she might have done in a big way. That proved that she was not a big woman. She cried

yet further as her mind dwelt upon this. But her tears were not tears of self-pity. They were tears of abasement. She felt herself so poignantly smaller than she had always considered herself to be.

When Uncle George finally did come, she changed from self-accusation to fury.

"Why did n't you tell me about Harry Edwards's trial — about what is about to happen to him?" she demanded.

"Why — why," stammered the old man, taken aback for a moment. Then he recovered himself. "For one reason, Jennie, this is the first day I have seen you since you ran away. And another is, I supposed you knew all about it from the papers — and knew just what you wanted to do in that matter."

Her sudden indignation very obviously had no case against Uncle George, so the flare of her temper died down.

"Hurry up, Jennie — just slip on that veil," Uncle George went on. "The car's waiting below and everything is all fixed for the get-away."

"There's not going to be any get-away, Uncle George. I'm going to give myself up."

"Give yourself up!" exclaimed the old man, staring at her. "Now, what in thunder are you thinking about?"

"Don't you see, Uncle George? It's because of Harry. Harry's in a much worse fix than I am." And she went on, rather breathlessly, and covered the ground her mind had covered since she had read the story in the paper he had left behind. Uncle George protested — argued — but finally, sighing deeply, he gave in.

"It's going to be just as you say, Jennie. After all, it's your own life Jerry and I have been monkeying

with, and I guess you've got a right to do with it as you please. But, my God," he groaned, "after all the big things we thought we'd done, to have it all end up like this! Jerry — it will 'most kill Jerry!"

He put his hands upon her shoulders and steadily regarded her with lashless, affectionate eyes. His next words were soft, and rather husky. "But after all, Jennie — you're a mighty square little guy!"

"No, I'm not. I've been a — a coward." Her tone changed to almost breathless eagerness. "I want to go down right now — and I want to see Harry the first thing — so he won't have to worry an extra minute!"

"Not so fast, dear. We've got to tell Jerry. And if you want to see Harry first, before the grand blow-off, there's some things that have got to be fixed up. And if you're going to do this — you might as well clean up the whole business."

Uncle George picked up the telephone and spoke in succession to many numbers. If the very proper young lady at the switchboard below had had any idea of who these persons were she was getting on the wire for the kindly old uncle of the sick girl above, that proper young lady would have been seized with shivers and would have had matter for amazed conversation for months to come.

"It's all fixed as far as I can fix it," said Uncle George, turning from the telephone. "Your father will meet us down in front of the Tombs. I guess we'd better be beating it."

And then another thing which she had long forgotten flashed upon Jennie. "Wait a minute! There's Casey!"

"Casey? You mean Officer Casey? How does Casey figure in this?"

"Long ago, he caught me, and he let me off, but he

made me promise that if anything ever went wrong with me, I was to let him have the arrest." Briefly she told Uncle George the circumstances.

"Casey is still a Central Office man," said Uncle George, "and is likely to be hanging around Headquarters at this hour. You might try for him there."

Jennie did, and presently, in the crisp, polite tone which an improved police administration had established as the manner for answering a telephone call, she heard a heavy voice in her ear:

"Officer Casey speaking."

"Mr. Casey, you may not recognize my voice. But you want very much to see me. Please be waiting for me in front of the Tombs in fifteen minutes."

She hung up, and presently, veiled, she was down in the closed car, the "safe" Jack at the wheel. Her imagination worked feverishly as she sped back to the region which had given her her being; it pictured sensational scenes in which she dramatized herself — scenes that might have been. In her mind she saw herself, as the solemn-voiced judge was pronouncing, "Harry Edwards, I sentence you to —" rising in the startled court-room, dramatically throwing aside her veil, and calling out, "Harry Edwards is an innocent man, and I am here to prove it!" She thought of other such big moments, such tremendous climaxes, as there had always been in the old plays of the Bowery, and as still appeared in some of the great successes of Broadway. But then — such big scenes were not to be hers. What she was doing she was doing in a very commonplace way — extremely undramatic — as a discredited woman, who is also a fugitive, can only do them. . . .

As the car drew up beside the Tombs, she saw, on the

sidewalk, Casey and her father. Uncle George pressed her back into her seat and stepped out first.

"You're not to make any scene, Jerry — not now, anyhow," said Uncle George. "Get me?"

Black Jerry nodded, his dark face lined and set.

"And, Casey, she's your prisoner all right — she's given herself up to you — but don't make the actual pinch for a few minutes. You can string along behind us — you and Jerry."

Uncle George then helped her out of the carriage. Black Jerry looked at her, showed no signs of recognition, and glanced away. But Officer Casey, as she passed him, said in a low voice:

"I'm awfully sorry things broke this way, Jennie — awfully sorry."

She entered the Tombs on Uncle George's arm, her father and Casey behind them. For a moment she stood alone, watching the herd of silent, strained-faced visitors waiting to see prisoners, and watching the brusque, domineering keepers — and she thought of the time when she had been here on her furtive visit to Harry: only now what a difference! After a few minutes she would be one of those in the blocks of cells whom people would seek passes to see.

But this scene was brief. In a minute, Black Jerry and Casey still behind her, she was being guided through a dark corridor, heavy with the damp odor of tens of thousands of prisoners who had come and gone, and at length she was ushered with her little party into that same bare counsel's room where she had before seen Harry, and the grilled doors clanged behind her.

And there again, as on that other occasion, stood Harry Edwards. She lifted her veil, moved toward him



— then from sheer weakness could go no farther. As he recognized her, his wasted face sagged with amazement.

"Jennie!" he cried. "Jennie Malone! My God — I thought you'd made your get-away!"

Her voice could not function for a moment, but her eyes did. She took in every detail of him, seeing behind his momentary amazement. He was worn and thin and haggard, and despite his only being in his mid-twenties there were a few gray hairs — for Harry Edwards had lived long with the knowledge of what was to be his fate. And yet he was erect and palely defiant.

"Jennie," he repeated, "I thought you'd made your get-away! My God — what are you doing here?"

"I've given myself up," she whispered.

"Given yourself up! What for?"

"She could have made her get-away," Uncle George put in from the background. "Everything was all ready — there would n't have been a slip."

"But, Jennie — what for?" repeated Harry.

"I just — just learned to-day," her thin voice answered, "what was about to happen to you — and — and, Harry, I could n't let that happen to you."

"You mean you've given yourself up to save me?"

She did not answer.

"I won't have it!" he cried fiercely. "I won't have you do that for me. For God's sake" — to the others — "get her out of this somehow — quick!"

"It's too late," returned Jennie, a little more body coming into her tone. "I'm already Officer Casey's prisoner."

She moved a step nearer him. "I've come to see you, Harry, because I wanted you to know straight off that everything was going to be all right with you — and

because this was the only way I'd probably ever have of seeing you alone."

"Jennie!" he breathed huskily.

"And I wanted to see you because I wanted to tell you that I know now that you were right in everything you've said in the past. Right about me, and right about — about other people. Right in everything except about Conway."

"Heaven knows I was wrong about Sam Conway!" And then explosively: "But, Jennie, why did you ever forge that check that got you into this trouble?"

"That did n't happen at all, Harry, the way it's been told to the public. But then I can never prove anything else. They have everything on their side."

"You mean Kenneth Harrison has double-crossed you in some way?"

"What's the use saying anything, Harry? I can never prove anything."

"Then he has — the damned hound!" Harry cried furiously.

She did not speak again for a moment. Then she held out her hand. "That's all, Harry. I've got to go with Mr. Casey now. And if I don't see you again, Harry — I'll always be wishing you the best of luck!"

"Jennie!" he cried huskily, "Jennie!"

For a moment they held hands, eyes into eyes. Perhaps the eyes of Jennie's soul had, without her knowledge, really been opening ere this — but, at any rate, they were open now. And she saw Harry as she had never truly seen him before: as fine and sincere and courageous and high-minded and steadfast — perhaps reckless at times — but always steadfast. And for an instant she thought of the man she had married: she saw

him in that last scene, his handsome face white, twitching, weak, as he had cast her overboard with lies that he might remain afloat. What a contrast!

It was then that Jennie realized the vastness of the mistake she had made — that her heart had always been more with Harry than with any other man. And yet she had deliberately cast Harry aside for — for that which she had got! Her soul cried out in its hopeless agony, but her eyes held only a few very quiet tears.

“Good-bye, Harry,” she whispered again.

“Good-bye, Jennie!” he breathed.

She withdrew her hand and went slowly out of the room.

She had supposed that, of course, she would be put immediately into a cell — but Uncle George had arranged many things over the telephone at the Martha Washington which she had not understood. Their course led them through an enclosed passage high-swung above the street — not till afterwards did she know that she had passed through the Bridge of Sighs — and finally brought them out upon a stone-paved balcony of a big building which had a wide rotunda reaching up from the marble-paved first floor to the sky-lit roof: the Criminal Courts Building she was later to remember it to be. The little party was shot up a few floors in an elevator, and after a minute she was in a comfortably furnished office, on a leather-covered couch with her father’s arm about her, talking to a tired-looking man introduced to her as the District Attorney.

She was just a little surprised — not knowing how thorough Uncle George had been in his telephoning — to find two other persons waiting in the District Attorney’s office: the little, wizened, furtive elevator-man

who had carried her to that secluded bower on the Grantham roof the night she had met Harry there, and also the waiter who had served them. She answered the District Attorney's questions with feverish eagerness — she had no greater desire just now than to clear Harry; and she did not spare herself in exposing the selfish reasons which had kept her silent all this while. And after she had finished, her statements were corroborated and supplemented by the little elevator-man, by the waiter, and by Uncle George, who at last had been freed to tell what he knew.

The District Attorney gave an order to an attendant, then closed his eyes in thought, and there was a long hush — then Harry Edwards was brought in under guard. There were no longer reasons for his silence, and he likewise told of being on the Grantham roof, and he also told of Sam Conway's frenzied appeal to him that far-gone night of the murder and of their secret meeting in Conway's inner office.

The District Attorney was a relentless prosecutor in the court-room, but he was a very human being out of it.

"Edwards," he said briefly, "it seems pretty thoroughly established that you were on the Grantham roof at the time Murdock was killed — it seems that you have a perfect alibi. If this stands up under further examination, and I think it will, I shall ask for your dismissal in court to-morrow morning. That's all, Edwards."

As Harry was led out, the District Attorney said in a crisp voice to an attendant: "Get out papers for the arrest of Sam Conway for the Murdock murder, and get him at once."

Then he turned to Jennie: his voice, though not unkind, was firm with official decision.

"Of course you understand, Mrs. Harrison" — Jennie shivered a little at the use of her married name — "that you are under arrest for this Harrison forgery."

Jennie nodded. Then she let her head slip upon her father's shoulder. Black Jerry held her to him in a fierce, defiant love. She felt his great chest heaving again; but she had no sense of what was going on within his soul other than a feeling that he loved her. She felt herself a weak, broken creature — so unheroic, so unsplendid — so pitifully different from all the confident dreams she had had. How she had fallen! — how she had disappointed all those who had loved her! For herself she did not care very much. This was the end.

Presently Casey touched her shoulder. She rose submissively, and followed him back across the Bridge of Sighs.



## CHAPTER XL

### HOW BLACK JERRY SET RIGHT THE WORLD

**B**LACK JERRY had kept in the background of the various scenes since Jennie had driven up to the Tombs, not merely because this had been advisable, but because the chaos in his soul knew no purpose, because he was inarticulate. And now that he had a few moments with her in the Tombs, and a plan was beginning to grow into a dim shape out of the chaos, he still was almost wordless.

"Dad — I'm so sorry — after all you've done for me — to have disappointed you like this!" Jennie wept.

"You'd have been all right if it had n't been for me!" he said huskily. And despite the presence of Casey and Uncle George and guards, he swept her against his chest and held her in an embrace which trembled despite its power. "You're all right, anyhow — you're my kid just the same!"

After that he pushed her from him, but still held her two hands. "Whatever happens, Jennie, just you remember that your father at least tried to give you a chance. Good-bye!"

His eyes, with a brilliant strange look, clung to her face in fierce pain and love — as though he would keep her with him always. Then he pressed a swift, crushing kiss upon her lips and abruptly walked away. "Dad — dad!" Jennie called after him, but he did not so much as look back upon her. And when Uncle George started to leave with him, Jerry roughly told his old friend he

wanted nobody's company, and he strode out of the Tombs alone.

Fifteen minutes later Black Jerry was in the little room at the rear of the Pekin, his office, where so many phases of Jennie's life had been determined. The door was locked, his elbows were on the table, and his hands were gripping his thick dark hair. Grief, love, a sense of complete failure, hatred, revenge, surged in a wild tumult in his soul. He had always been a primitive elemental man, and never in all his life — not even in the long ago when Jennie's mother had left him — had his few elements dominated him so violently as in this solitary hour.

He had dreamed great dreams for Jennie — and they had failed — utterly failed. In his present dark mood, in which he could not see values in their right proportions, he did not spare himself. Jennie had come to her present pass largely because of him, his position in life, the name he had borne. He recalled with electric vividness the words of the judge that night when the girlish Jennie had been on trial — how the judge had said that a girl could have no chance in life who had a man like the notorious Black Jerry for a father. And that was true — every word of it true! He had tried to help her, but he had been to her only a fatal burden. Except for him, and the heritage of his dark name, it would never have been necessary for her to have assumed a new personality. And even so, except for him, she would not now be in her extreme predicament: the charges against her would probably count for little, might indeed never have been made, had the Harrisons not been able to point to her record — that she was the daughter of the notorious Black Jerry Malone, that she had once before

been on trial for forgery. And for all her early misdeeds Jerry held himself blamable: through all her childhood he had never given her right care.

Yes, he had always been a handicap upon her. It would have been far, far better for her if she had never had him for a father — or, at least, with his being her father, better that she might have grown up and lived without ever being under the ignominy of his name. And he saw himself in the future — whatever her future might be — as being a handicap. So long as he lived, so long as his name was remembered, she would be known as "Black Jerry's daughter," and forever he would be dragging her down!

Black Jerry may not have been judging truly, but in this dark orgasm of his soul this is how he reasoned, how his whole being reacted and functioned. . . .

And Slim Jackson, who had betrayed her, and Kenneth Harrison, who had begged her to commit this forgery to save him and then had thrown the whole blame upon her — his whole being was clenched with an overmastering desire for vengeance upon these two! For vengeance — and something more. . . . His passions did not subside, but his brain became more composed and began to work carefully, constructively, remorselessly.

For an hour he sat thinking — thinking with a care and an intensity with which he had never thought before. For this plan he was shaping was the supreme plan of Black Jerry's life.

Shortly after six he relaxed. He had thought out everything. He carefully wrote out three brief messages. Then he wrote a short note to Jennie, stepped out to his bar, and handed it to his bar-tender. "Bill," he said,

in an even voice, "I'm going out and may not be back for a day or so. Get word to Uncle George to come by this way in the morning and ask him to take this to Jennie down at the Tombs."

He mounted to his apartment, in which he had lived the solitary life of a bachelor these many years, and locked the door. Then very carefully he drew down every blind. After that he took off his suit, so old that it was familiar to all his friends; he removed every garment in which he had been seen that afternoon; even the socks and shoes. These he made into a flat, compact parcel. Then he dressed very lightly in quite other clothes, omitting coat and vest, and slipped on a long raincoat — for fortunate for his purpose a drizzling rain had begun to fall. And then, last of all, he shoved an automatic into his hip pocket. This last act he did somewhat awkwardly, for this was the first time in over fifteen years that Black Jerry had had arms upon his person.

With the flat parcel under his raincoat he went down into the street. Since he wore the black derby he had worn all day, none who knew him and saw him would suspect that he was dressed in other than the blue serge which was his invariable wear. First he went to a drug-store in which there was a public telephone in a booth. He was certain both Kenneth and Slim Jackson were then in the city, and he was almost certain where each was to be located at this hour; but this knowledge he verified by the discreet use of the telephone.

Black Jerry had these many, many years been law-abiding, at least in the technical sense of the laws and as he understood them; but he had many friends in what is called the underworld, who were loyal to him

and who had profound reason to be. He made his way to a pawnshop; it was an indubitable pawnshop — but also it was other things.

“Joe,” he said to the old proprietor when they were safe in the latter’s back room, “I want you to send out one message and two telegrams for me. It’s up to you to get ’em out so they can never afterwards be traced as being anything except perfectly straight. It’s part of your business to know how to do such things — so I’m not going to give you any advice. Take a pencil and I’ll read the stuff off to you.”

The first was a message to the captain of the *Myra*, the Harrisons’ yacht, which Jerry knew to be now at anchor in the Hudson River. From the vindictive Doris Dorraine he had learned that there were frequent and very private sessions of merriment on board the *Myra* of nights — and that prior to such events the captain and all the crew were given shore leave. So this first message was an order, in Kenneth’s name, to the captain for all on board to absent themselves at once.

The second message was a telegram to Slim Jackson, so worded as to be of such veiled importance as would make certain Slim’s obedience, asking him to be on the *Myra* at nine that evening. This telegram bore Kenneth’s name.

The third message was to Kenneth, bore the signature of Slim Jackson and was in substance a duplicate of the other. Jerry had made the hour as early as nine so that there would hardly be time for the two to communicate with each other. He believed, moreover, that the veiled importance he had put into the messages would bring about the unsuspecting compliance of both men.



This task attended to (and he knew the business would be done well), Jerry went out of the pawnshop. The July rain was now falling steadily. This kept the people off the streets — which was also fortunate; further, the heavy sky made the streets darker than they otherwise would have been — which again was fortunate. Jerry strode through the deserted gloom until he came to the East River. He had selected in his mind a certain pier for his purpose; and watching his chance he got out upon it without attracting attention. At the extreme end he paused and drew the packet from beneath his raincoat. The cord and paper he threw down into the rain-hissing water; the clothes he arranged in careful disarray behind four huge stanchions where they would not be found until morning.

Three quarters of an hour later he was uptown on the opposite side of the city, close to the Manhattan Yacht Club. He waited in the darkness, for he knew that the men from the Myra would land here.

He had not been there more than five minutes when a boat drew up alongside the end of the club float nearest him, and four figures stepped out, made the boat fast and disappeared. He was sure that these were the Myra's crew, but he waited until the stern of the boat swung around toward him; the light from the clubhouse was dim, but he could clearly spell out M-Y-R-A. He now had no doubt, and he carefully pushed out from shore in a small rowboat he had commandeered.

Ten minutes later he stepped on the deck of the Myra, and made fast his boat to the ladder. He made a cautious and swift round of the yacht. Not a soul was on board — just as he had counted. Returning, he untied the painter of his stolen boat and cast it loose upon the

outgoing tide; then he took off his shoes, and dropped them overboard. After that he crouched in the black shadows of the port of the cabin and waited.

Another ten minutes passed, and then a rowboat softly bumped the *Myra's* side, and Slim Jackson stepped upon the deck. At once the boat pushed off and slipped back toward the shore. Slim went down the companionway into the cabin, called for the steward, and getting no answer, threw off his raincoat and vanished into the galley, reappearing a moment later with a half-bottle of champagne. He drew the cork, seated himself at the cabin table, and drank leisurely.

Presently another boat bumped the yacht's side, discharged a passenger, and made back for the shore. The instant Kenneth went down the companionway, Black Jerry threw his derby hat far out into the water, and slipped off his raincoat and tossed it likewise over into the tide, which might carry it a dozen miles — perhaps a hundred — from where the *Myra* lay at anchor. He now stood in shirt and belted trousers. While he had waited he had drawn on a pair of delicately thin rubber gloves such as surgeons wear; they had his finger prints down at Police Headquarters, and he wished to leave behind no slightest proof that he had been on board that night.

"Hello, Kenneth," he heard Slim drawl as Kenneth threw off his raincoat. "That was a queer stunt, Jennie's giving herself up to-day."

"It certainly was," replied Kenneth. "I thought she was out of the country."

"Do you think it may get us in bad? I suppose you wanted a business talk — that's why you sent that telegram to me?"

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Kenneth. "I never sent any telegram to you. I'm here because of one you sent me."

"One I sent you!" Slim sprang to his feet. "I never sent you one — you never sent me one — Kenneth, there's something crooked here!"

"There sure is," agreed Jerry's heavy voice as he stepped through the cabin doorway.

The two men whirled about upon him. "Black Jerry!" ejaculated Slim Jackson.

Black Jerry closed the cabin door, and bareheaded, open-throated, huge and menacing, he stood motionless glaring at the two men. They had drawn back a pace at his sudden entrance.

"Well, Jerry, what's the great idea?" Slim tried to speak with his usual nonchalance.

Jerry's emotions did not allow him to answer at once. When he spoke, he spoke with husky savageness. "The great idea is that us three have something to talk over. And first thing, you two guys are to sit down at that table."

The two men did not at once comply. "Sit down!" growled Jerry, advancing toward them. At his glowering approach, Slim Jackson whipped from somewhere within his perfect evening dress a small automatic. But before he could level it, Black Jerry had sprung, for Jerry had foreseen the possibility of this action. Jerry's great hand clutched Slim's wrist, there was an instant's struggle, then the automatic was Jerry's, and as he sent Slim spinning across the cabin he turned on Kenneth.

"Put up your hands — you sweet son-in-law of mine!" he commanded with his guttural fierceness.

Very pale, Kenneth put them up. Jerry slapped his pockets, and drew out another pistol.

"So — you were expecting trouble," Jerry commented. "Sit down, both of you!"

Black Jerry took a chair across the table from the two, and fixed them with his blazing eyes.

"Now we're going to have a little talk, us three — quiet; out here no one can hear us or disturb us. And what we're going to talk about is this: you two got my Jennie into this mess — it's up to you to get her out clean."

"But I have n't done anything, Jerry, to get Jennie into a mess," objected Slim.

"You lie! You have n't done just what my sweet son-in-law has done, but you're guilty as hell!" He shifted his glittering eyes back to Kenneth. "You there — you get some of this ship's fancy writing-paper from that rack over there, and bring ink and a pen."

Kenneth hesitated. But Jerry's gaze was compelling. Kenneth obeyed and came back to his chair with pen, ink, and thick paper embossed with the emblem of the Manhattan Yacht Club and with the Myra's name.

"Now, write," Jerry commanded. "I am going to tell you what to say, but it's up to you to put it into good language. You write that the two of you realize that the police are closing in on you —"

Kenneth, who had started to write, looked up. "Police closing in on us? What for?"

"For that Myrtle Freeman disappearance." Kenneth's blanched lips twitched at this. "You see," Jerry explained grimly, "Doris Dorraine has spilled everything she knows about you two, and I've handed it on to a copper friend of mine. You may not understand

that sentence about the coppers closing in on you — but the coppers will understand. So you get busy with your pen."

Black Jerry continued, with pauses to permit the writing. "You put that down about you two realizing that the police are closing in on you . . . you say that you know you have no chance and you realize what is before you . . . that you can't stand this thing any longer . . . but that before you do what you intend to do . . ."

This time it was Slim who interrupted. "What we intend to do! What's that?"

"You let him write ahead!" Jerry ordered fiercely.

"I'll not do it!" cried Kenneth, flinging down his pen. "I get your idea! This is a confession you are forcing out of us — a confession you'll take charge of!"

"You bet I'll take charge of it! And you'll write just what I say!"

One of the automatics came up and directed itself straight into Kenneth's eyes. His eyes wavered, turned for aid to Slim Jackson, and caught a swift, meaning look. Jerry also caught that look and knew what it conveyed: that it would be easy enough for them to repudiate the confession as a document forced out of them by threats, even if Jerry finally did obtain possession of it — that their word would count as everything against the discredited Black Jerry Malone.

Kenneth picked up his pen. "What else is there to it?"

"You write this: 'Under these conditions, we want at least to clear all innocent parties. . . . I, Kenneth Harrison, declare that I have lied about my wife. . . .



That I stole money from the Shipman firm, that I was about to be found out, that I begged my wife to forge that check to save me. . . . She forged it only because I asked her to, in order to save me, and she never got a penny of the money. . . . I am really the only guilty person. . . . My father knows these to be the facts, and I ask him to testify to them.' That's all you need to say, Harrison. Now, just sign your name on the dotted line."

Kenneth did as ordered. With the barrel of his automatic Jerry pushed the sheet over in front of Slim Jackson.

"Your turn, Slim. There won't be much for you to write, so there will be room on the same sheet of paper. Get ready."

Slim dipped the pen.

"You write that you always were a crook even long ago when you used to work in Jerry Malone's joint. . . . Write that you learned that Jennie Malone was clever with her pen, and that you put her up to forging, you managing everything except the signing of the checks. . . . Write that that Morrison check, for which she was arrested five or six years ago, was the same as the others — that you, besides putting her up to it, did all the crooked work except signing the check. . . . Write that you asked her to take all the blame in court, so's you'd be kept out of it, and write that she done just what you asked. . . . That's all for you, Slim Jackson, except signing on the dotted line."

Slim attached his signature. He clearly saw a way of making all this worth less than nothing.

Keeping the pair covered with his automatic, Black Jerry, with his rubber-gloved hand, picked up the

confession and read it carefully. Then he pushed it back to Kenneth.

"Address an envelope to the District Attorney of New York County," he ordered, "and write on it, 'Immediate.'" Kenneth complied. "Now, fold that paper, put it in the envelope, seal it, and put it in the center of this table."

"Now that you've got it, Jerry," said Slim, trying to speak nonchalantly, "what's your next pleasant little order?"

Jerry rose from the table. He was going forward with his plan grimly, heavily, almost mechanically.

"Next you two stand up," he ordered.

"But what's the idea?" Slim protested. "Where do we go from here?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you. Stand up!" The two men obeyed. "Now, back up against the wall, while you listen to a few things."

They went backward until their shoulders were against the mahogany paneling. Jerry faced them, Slim's automatic in one hand, Kenneth's automatic thrust into the front of his trousers. More poignantly than ever before he thought of Jennie, of the sorry end of his dreams and long planning for her; and in his subconscious mind were also those things of which Doris Dorraine had told him — things which had wrecked other lives. All that men had called primitive, brutal, unmoral, surged up in him to a climax of fury — all that was remorseless.

"Slim Jackson," he gritted, "you've always been a liar and a crook and every damned rotten thing there is. If it had n't been for you, my Jennie would have made good! You deserve the worst the State can give you,

but you're too smooth ever to get caught. But, Slim, you're not so clever that I did n't guess what was passing in your head. Don't you suppose I understand that if you get away now, that confession won't help Jennie a damn? So you're not going to get away! I'm going to save Jennie! I'm going to do what the State ought —"

Slim lunged swiftly at him, but Jerry, on the alert, caught him in a great hand that closed upon shirt front and coat lapels, at the same time covering Kenneth with his weapon. "I'd like to choke you, Slim Jackson," Jerry gritted on, "only I don't want any finger marks on your throat. You're a rat, damn you — and you're going to have a rat's finish!"

So swiftly that Slim could not raise a warding hand, Jerry flashed Slim's automatic from Kenneth and pressed it against Slim's right temple. There was a sharp explosion and Slim Jackson slumped to the floor. The automatic fell beside him, and the next instant the second pistol — it was Kenneth's — was in Jerry's hand and was covering the shrinking Kenneth.

"For God's sake — for God's sake —" gasped Kenneth.

But Jerry was at once upon him, broke down the frantic, clawing hands, and thrust the automatic close against his head. There was another explosion, and Kenneth Harrison pitched to the floor.

Breathing mightily, Jerry examined the two collapsed figures. Both were quite dead. The trickling wounds were powder-burnt; that was as he had desired. He moved each man's weapon close to his right hand, and arose. He felt no more of compunction than if they had indeed been what he had called them — rats. In his mind they more than deserved their end; and, be-

sides, their death and its manner were only necessary details of a far larger plan which he hoped was coming out all right.

He gave a glance at the limp pair — such admired figures in their day! — and then let his eyes rest a moment upon the packet on the table addressed to the District Attorney. After that he slipped out of the cabin, closed the door, and made his way to the stern.

Here he paused a moment, his lightly clad figure beaten upon by the rain, and tossed overboard the pistol which he had brought along for use in emergency, but which luckily he had not had to draw. Already he had forgotten what had happened down in the Myra's cabin, and what lay there awaiting the morrow's discovery. His eyes and mind were directed into the dark southeast where stood the Tombs.

His lips parted in a husky, broken whisper: "Jennie! . . . I hope it works out all right, Jennie. . . . Good-bye!"

He let himself down into the gloomy water; and upon the bosom of the sea-going tide, with easy, silent strokes that had a tremendous reserve of power, Black Jerry swam away through the darkness . . . out into the unknown. . . .

## CHAPTER XLI

### THE NEXT DAY

JENNIE slept hardly at all in the cell to which Casey and a keeper had led her. Bail had not been secured because of technical difficulties, and she had begged Uncle George not to bother about her. The night was a night of self-assessment, of humiliation. Morning found her still in the same low spirits. She had made a sad, sad mess of her life and of the lives of those who had really cared for her. Yes, she was a broken, futile thing.

She had refused to see reporters, but toward half-past ten there came a summons which she could not have refused even had she so desired. She was led across the Bridge of Sighs and into a court-room, where she repeated before judge and jury the story she had told in the District Attorney's office the evening before. Her testimony finished, she was led back to her cell.

Almost at once Uncle George appeared outside her bars. After they had greeted each other, he said in a hearty tone which he tried to make inspiring of confidence:

"Cheer up, Jennie; we're going to find a way out of this! You've heard of Moses Aaronson — the best lawyer in New York City for a case of this kind. He's out of town this morning, but I've retained him by wire, and he'll be here on the job by noon. You just leave this to Aaronson, and don't worry!"

But his encouraging words had no effect on Jennie.

"Perhaps you have n't seen the morning papers yet,"



Uncle George went on, bent on diverting her. "I brought them all round. Here they are." He thrust them through the bars. "I tell you what — the newspaper boys have certainly turned themselves loose on you again!"

Yes, there she was once more on the front pages. She skimmed one account through, grasping a phrase here and one there. The reporter, seeking romance to relieve the grisly war news, had left out nothing that would give color to his story. The beautiful Mrs. Kenneth Harrison — until a month before one of the most brilliant young women in New York's smartest society — revealed as the daughter of Black Jerry Malone — a fugitive from the police on the charge of a gigantic forgery — gives herself up in order to alibi an old sweetheart who was about to be sentenced to death. Jennie glanced at the other papers. Their stories were much the same. All were built along the lines of melodrama which newspapers believe their readers want — and perhaps believe rightly.

Yes, once again she was, next to the war, the supreme newspaper sensation of the day. She dropped the papers indifferently to the floor of her cell. It all meant nothing whatever to her now, one way or the other.

"Well, anyhow, here's something that ought to cheer you up," Uncle George said heartily, still bent on lighting if only for a moment her darkened spirit. "It's a letter from your father. Guess Jerry could n't show up this morning."

She took the letter which Black Jerry, as part of his great plan, had composed so carefully the evening before and left in charge of his bar-keeper. She read:

DEAR JENNIE:

Me and my bad name have been too much of a load for you all your life. I guess no kid could have got by with such a load. If it had n't been for me, you'd have got on O.K.

It's going to be just as bad for you in the future unless I stop being a load. So I'm going to pass out. Don't worry about me. I won't be losing much. I don't care about things any more, except you, and this is the best way to help you.

I guess it'll be the river. That always did seem to me the easiest way of passing out.

I hope luck breaks better for you after I am out of your way.

Yours

JERRY MALONE

Jennie collapsed in a heap upon the floor of the cell. "Dad!" she cried wildly. "Dad!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Uncle George.

For answer she thrust the letter through the bars. Uncle George read, then exclaimed in awed amazement:

"My God!"

"He's — he's — committed suicide," sobbed Jennie, "because he thought that would help me!"

"My God!" repeated Uncle George. For a moment he stood silent, gazing at the sheet of note-paper. Then he said huskily:

"Jennie, for fifteen years and more this town has got Black Jerry all wrong. Let me take this letter to show to some of the newspaper boys. They'll find out, anyhow, what's happened to him, and this letter will help set them right as to the sort of man he really was. I'll give it back to you."

Jennie nodded her consent. Uncle George wisely decided that this was an occasion when Jennie had best be left alone with her grief. So remarking, "As soon as

Aaronson shows up, we'll see to your bail," he stole away.

Left to herself, Jennie sobbed on, convulsively yet silently. She now saw and understood as never before what she had meant to her father. Always he had loved her, always he had thought of her and planned for her! And now at the end, when the crash had come, he had given up his life for her, because he had believed this would make her life easier!

What a failure she had made of her life! How she had involved all those who had loved her best in disaster and ruin! She had probably saved Harry, yes; but she had only come to his rescue after she had lost her great world — what a miserable performance! . . .

Toward one o'clock the raucous cries of newsboys penetrated even to the inner fastness of her cell; but these cries did not for an instant divert her mind from her misery. But a little later Uncle George appeared again — and it was now a very excited Uncle George, indeed, who stood on the other side of the bars.

"Have seen Aaronson, and he's working like the dickens on your case," he announced.

This did not interest Jennie in the least.

"And Harry, on motion of the District Attorney, has been acquitted."

"I'm glad," she said simply.

"And what your father said he'd do in his letter, he did all right," Uncle George continued. "They found his clothes over on the end of an East River dock that he jumped from. It's all in the afternoon papers. His body has n't been found yet — maybe never will be, for those East River tides are terrific. And that letter he wrote you, it went great with the newspaper boys. The

boys thought Jerry must have been half-cracked, but that letter got right to them. For once in his life the newspapers have treated Jerry white."

"Dad, I'm so glad — so glad!" Jennie sobbed.

"But none of that is the real news!" exclaimed Uncle George. "Listen, Jennie. No, read it for yourself. Here's an extra that will tell you all about it."

Jennie took the paper. There was a huge black double headline across the entire top of the front page, with headlines of lesser degree, announcing the double suicide of the prominent young financier Kenneth Harrison, and of the great stage favorite Jackson Holt, on board the former's yacht. The captain, the hastily written account stated, had received an order the evening before to withdraw with the crew from the *Myra* for the night — an order such as frequently came to him. On his return to the *Myra* that morning at eleven o'clock, he had discovered the two dead men in the cabin, and had at once sent for the police. Two automatics had been found, one shell discharged from each. The police had declared them indubitable cases of suicide; there were no signs of death from any other possible cause. A sealed envelope had been found on the cabin table addressed to the District Attorney of New York County, which had been taken straight to the District Attorney. This letter might throw light upon the self-inflicted deaths of the two men.

Jennie looked up from the sensational account. She drew a long, bewildered breath. Her husband dead — Slim Jackson dead! She did not say this to herself consciously, but even more than ever did she have a sense that the drama of her life was moving fast that day and was crowded with high incident — and yet she herself

was only an off-stage figure, who neither willed anything nor did anything.

"I wonder what can be in that letter to the District Attorney?" she breathed at length.

"I wonder, too," said Uncle George. "I stopped in at the District Attorney's office, and learned he had sent for Kenneth Harrison's father."

After Uncle George had gone, Jennie kept on wondering, when she was not thinking of other matters, for an hour or two or three. And then again she was ushered across the Bridge of Sighs, and again into the office of the District Attorney. She was much of an automaton — worn, sick with herself, broken with grief, bewildered with events — moving chiefly because she was ordered or some one led her; not till later were her senses to understand and appreciate the full significance of the happenings of that day.

Uncle George was in the District Attorney's office, and so was Officer Casey, and so was a bald, efficient-looking gentleman to whom she was introduced as her attorney, Mr. Aaronson. She was given a chair at the corner of the District Attorney's desk.

"I suppose you have heard of the deaths of your husband and of Jackson Holt?" inquired the District Attorney.

"Yes, sir."

"I have here an original document, part in the handwriting of each, and part signed by each, which it is your privilege to read and which I request you to read."

Jennie took the heavy sheet of the Myra stationery, and read those confessions that out in the cabin of the rain-pelted yacht had been written under the compulsion of Black Jerry's pistol, confessions which were now



to stand forever as the unchallenged truth. Having read them, she looked up in bewilderment.

"Why did you never declare that in this Harrison forgery business you were acting upon the dictation and only as the instrument of your husband?" demanded the District Attorney.

She replied mechanically. "What with my old record, and with my husband and his father charging me with it and denying any connection with the matter, no one would have believed me. What would have been the use?"

Her answer obviously seemed convincing to the District Attorney. He took the document from her.

"That reference to the police closing in on them, which was the motive for their self-destruction, is something which Officer Casey here seems thoroughly to understand," he continued. "Mr. Harrison has been here to-day, and when shown this statement he fully corroborated his son — I may say that he even went farther. I must go through certain legal formalities, Mrs. Harrison, which may necessitate your later appearance in court; but as a result of these developments I can say that probably neither that old charge against you nor the present more serious one will ever come to trial. I have, therefore, arranged to have you granted your liberty in the custody of your counsel. That is all."

Dazedly Jennie allowed herself to be led out, instinctively letting down the veil which had been part of the garb in which she had come to prison.

"I knew you were going to get free on some basis," exulted Uncle George. "So I've got a car waiting down in Franklin Street. Come on."

"Just a minute." It was Casey who spoke. The heavy

face of the plain-clothes man was kindly, and he was holding out a big hand. "I'm mighty glad things have broke right for you, Jennie. Here's wishing you the best of luck!"

"Thank you, Mr. Casey," and Jennie gripped his hand.

Immediately she was surrounded by a clamorous group of young and middle-aged men. "They're reporters — the District Attorney gave out that confession to 'em before you saw it," Uncle George explained. And then to them: "See here, boys, she's tired almost to death. Just remember what she's been through. Besides, the District Attorney's got all the dope — and, besides, you boys all know that your best stories are the ones you fake. So be good sports, and let her off this time."

They made way for her. But a part of the group, armed with black boxes, followed the pair, and as they stepped out into Franklin Street a representative of the group halted Uncle George and spoke beseechingly. Uncle George turned to Jennie.

"They're camera-men. Next to the war this is the biggest story since — well, God knows since when. And these boys say they have n't got any decent pictures of you to print. You're clear, and a picture is n't going to hurt you now — so let 'em snap you."

So Jennie lifted her veil and stood against the red brick of the Criminal Courts Building, while the camera-men huddled each other about and peered down into the queer hoods of their black boxes and clicked shutters upon the first picture to be made of her since she had been a child.

"And now for home," said Uncle George, when the men were through. "I'm taking you to my apartment

— that's going to be your home after this. Here's our car."

Jennie noted that the car was the same limousine which had brought her here — only now the curtains were closely drawn — and that the same "Jack" was at the wheel. "Step right in," said Uncle George at her elbow, opening the door. She obeyed. The door closed sharply, she sank back into the seat, and the car moved away.

The machine had swung around into Lafayette Street before she realized that Uncle George had not entered the car with her. She looked about her. There in the dimness sat Harry Edwards.

"Jennie!" he whispered. "Jennie!" And then: "You're free? Uncle George said he was sure you would be."

She nodded.

"Jennie!" he said again. "Jennie!" His eyes clung to her face and hers held to him. One of his hands stole out and clutched hers, and automatically her fingers tightened upon and clung to it. Tears came into his eyes, and her own flowed tears, but for several blocks they did not speak. There was too much to be spoken of; even the great facts that the same day had made Jennie both widow and orphan were merged in this unutterable whole.

Her eyes, unwaveringly fixed upon his unwavering eyes, could no more hide her soul than could a child's. His lips parted. "Jennie!" he breathed again, and daringly, tenderly, he took her into his arms. She relaxed against him. She was dazed and shattered with grief — but through grief and daze she had a sense that her heart, after far wanderings, had at last come home.

## CHAPTER XLII

### JERRY — AND JERRY

LIFE histories do not end at some definite point, before which there was everything, and after which there is nothing. They reach forward through the years, and through conditions which may help twist or help gloriously develop a history's character. For Life goes on — forever on.

But since the fragments of human history we may choose to write must *close* somewhere, this history of Jennie Malone, and of her father, and of the three men who loved her, and of the persons who vitally influenced her ambition and the unfolding of her soul — this history may be closed, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, upon a certain quiet afternoon in January, 1917, a year and a half after Jennie had ridden away from the Tombs. And it may be closed in the apartment of Uncle George, which had been her home since the day of her discharge: and more especially her home since her marriage to Harry Edwards, when Uncle George had moved out, and, as compensation for his self-imposed dispossession, had become a regular late afternoon visitor upon those who were now dearest to him.

Mrs. Harrison and Sue (who had been Mrs. William Grayson these last six months) were just leaving. Sue was bloomingly happy, for youth quickly recovers, and besides, she now had her own personal life. Mrs. Harrison was rather more grave than in other years, but was not the less kindly. The death of Kenneth, and the shame which had followed his death, had almost broken

her; and she had suffered when her husband's business ambitions had collapsed after the conviction of Sam Conway; but she still was generously and graciously and whole-heartedly thoughtful of others—as she would ever be until the end.

They had already enthused and marveled over Jennie's baby, and there now remained only the moment of parting at the door. Sue had kissed Jennie, had engaged to see her the following Friday — they saw each other every few days — when Mrs. Harrison took Jennie's hands and gazed steadfastly down into Jennie's face with her soft blue eyes which were now glistening with tears.

"Jennie, I'm so glad that you are happy!" said the low-pitched voice. "Do you remember what I once said to you in the rose garden out at Silver Bluffs long ago? — that you had strength and character — that you were going to grow up into a splendid woman — that you were going to be a helpful influence to those whose fortune it might be to touch your life. I had no dream of what was going to happen, but I was right, Jennie! It has all come true!"

"Oh, Mrs. Harrison — please!" was all Jennie could say.

"Mother's right," declared Sue stoutly. "I've heard Billy say how splendidly Harry is doing with his new firm — and I just simply know it's because of you!"

Jennie's attempted protest was muffled and cut short by farewell kisses. After the mother and daughter had left, Jennie stood in thought a moment. Out of the wreckage of what she had once considered her great world, she had salvaged these two. Mr. and Mrs. Shipman had gone out of her life; perhaps because she had



permitted them to — she had made no overture to them since the day her brilliant world had crashed in fragments about her; and all the other great acquaintances had also gone. But these two were loyal, generous, loving friends — and she knew they would be such always.

She crossed softly to a white bassinet, and taking a chair, gazed down upon the tiny yet sturdy figure which slept therein. Her face glowed. Could any have looked upon her who had known her in her days of shrewd planning and brilliant success, they would have been struck by what a different Jennie she now was. Time, experience, suffering, sorrow, loving, being loved, had made her see and value the realities of life as compared with its glitter and its falsities — had awakened her soul to knowledge of itself, and had helped her soul come into its own. The brilliant future in a brilliant world, which she had once dreamed of, was now never to be. But an even better dream, though she had never dreamed it, was coming true. She was still very young — she still had far to go before she attained the fullness of what she was to be; but her face, softened, a trifle fuller, and much more truly beautiful than in other days when many men had loved her and had so differently striven for her, was rich with promises for the future.

She was still gazing down at the tiny face when Harry let himself in with his latch-key. The next instant she was on her feet and in his arms. A new manliness had been developed in him by love and work and responsibility — a manliness composed of self-confidence and what we sometimes term solidity of character. Perhaps Harry would never be a great man in a worldly sense; but that loyalty which had distinguished his early years,

and which so nearly had brought a fatal consequence, was still a conspicuous quality in his maturer face. Yes, he would be always loyal. He would be a real man.

The baby awakened — first with a cry — then with a healthy, satisfied stretching of tiny arms. Jennie lifted him out of the bassinet. This hour, from five to six, she considered her most precious period with him, for this was the one hour of the twenty-four when he was healthily and happily awake, and when Harry was at home to see him at his best.

They talked at him the usual nonsense of young parents, now and then evoking a germinal smile on the soft pink face. But that smile, flitting as it was, was enough to call forth exclamations of ravished amazement. There never had been such a baby — there really never had!

"He's a wonder, all right, Jerry is!" enthused Harry. "And you can bet he's going to have every chance in the world!"

He certainly was, agreed Jennie.

"I say, Jennie, Jerry looks an awful lot like you to-night."

"No, I think he takes a lot more after you!" Jennie protested.

Harry shook his head. "No, like you." He looked from the baby up to her and then back at the baby — and meditated. "He's going to have black hair and a rather dark skin." His voice softened a little. "Jennie, I have an idea that he may not look very much like either of us; that he may look a lot more like Black Jerry — your father, I mean."

"Like — like dad!" she breathed.

He did not quite understand what was rising in her

mind, for he went on stoutly: "It'll be a fine thing if he does look like your father. Black Jerry was all right! He'd have been a wonder if he had ever had the chance we are going to give our Jerry!"

She did not answer. Soft tears filled her eyes. For the moment her mind was filled with her father; her heart throbbed with a tender, poignant ache. How her dad had loved her! — even to the point where he had believed that his mere existence would be a millstone around the neck of her future, and so to insure her happiness had made away with himself! . . .

She had grieved deeply during the year and a half that had passed since she had received Jerry's scrawl announcing his purpose of passing out of her life, and out of all life, in order that she might no longer be shamed and held down by his notoriety. But youth, through its excess of vitality, always recovers from its non-mortal wounds when there is something to live for. Jerry's death was a fact — Jennie was now accustomed to it — it would always remain a grief of her life; but time was softening that grief to a tender memory.

There was a ring of the apartment bell, which was answered by the maid, and after a moment Uncle George came in. Time had made little change in him. For many years he had looked a spruce, oldish man, and he would doubtless look exactly the same until his last day.

Uncle George was called upon to admire young Jerry, which he did for several minutes with very real enthusiasm. Then Jennie recalled something.

"By the way, Uncle George, there was a man — some kind of a soldier — here to see you a while ago. He said he had a message for you."

"Did he leave it?"

"No. He said his orders were to deliver it personally into your hands. I told him you'd be here about this time, and he said he'd come back."

"Speaking of soldiers, Uncle George," said Harry, "what do you think of to-day's news about our relations with Germany? Do you think we're going to get pulled into the big fight?"

"Sure as fate, Harry — and soon."

"Well, if it comes to that" — Harry gave a wistful look at Jennie — "I'd like to be over there in France, mixing it up with the rest of them."

Uncle George spoke before Jennie had a chance to reply. "Your spirit's all right, son, but you'll never have a chance to get over."

"Why not?" demanded Harry.

Uncle George was wise in other matters than the gay life of hotels and restaurants with which most of his acquaintances identified him. "Because, son, if we get into this war, we're going to need fighters at the front, and fighters right here at home making things to fight with. The Government is never going to let such an expert engineer and manager as you are growing to be get into a lieutenant's uniform, when you'll count for ten times as much in the big fight by staying right here helping manage about fifty-seven thousand varieties of things that we'll be doing all at once. That's all there is to it, son; so let's change the subject and talk about the baby."

They did — until the apartment bell rang once more. The person shown in was a man with a slight limp, in the uniform of a sergeant of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

"Oh, Uncle George," said Jennie, "this is the soldier who wanted to see you."

The sergeant bowed to Jennie, and then turned to Uncle George. "Is this Mr. George Hamilton?"

"Yes," said Uncle George.

"I have a letter for you — but, pardon me, what I've got to say is private."

"Stay right where you are, Uncle George," put in Jennie. "Harry and the baby and I have n't had our evening look out at Central Park. If you talk low, we won't be able to hear a word."

When Jennie, with tiny Jerry in her arms, and Harry were at the windows at the opposite end of the room, the sergeant spoke in a carefully subdued voice.

"I'm invalided home, but expect to get back to the front," he explained briefly. "In the hospital over there where I was laid up with this leg, I got to know the man in the bed next to mine. We got to be — you know — buddies. When he learned I was to be sent back, he asked me to carry a letter to you. He said he would n't send it by mail; was afraid of the censors; said I was his chance to get it past the censors."

The sergeant loosened a button of his tunic, pulled forth an envelope which he handed to Uncle George, and bowed himself out. Uncle George drew an easy-chair up before the coal fire which glowed in the grate and examined the envelope. It was soiled and greasy by being long carried close to the human body; George's name and the address on Central Park West were printed. Curiously Uncle George tore open the worn envelope and unfolded the letter. There was neither address nor signature, but Uncle George experienced one of the moments of greatest amazement of all his life.



The cramped, unaccustomed handwriting was unmistakably that of Black Jerry.

The letter read:

Don't tell any one about me.

I'm writing this letter because I want to ask you to stand by Jennie and see she gets a square deal.

I seen at last that me and my bad name were too much of a handicap for any kid to carry and have a fair chance in the running. I'd tried the other thing, and I seen there was nothing to it. I seen that the only way for Jennie to have a fair chance was for me to pass out of her life forever. You know — pass out so she'd think I was finished and everybody else would think I was finished, and so I could n't ever drag her down again.

No use telling you what I did first — but I made a freighter that was just shipping for Rio, and they put me down below shoveling coal. From Rio I came to Bordeaux. I dyed my hair, joined up with the Foreign Legion, and for eleven months off and on I been out there in the trenches. I been in this hospital two months with a shrapnel wound, but I'm just about O.K. By the time you get this, I'll be back there in the trenches again. No use trying to locate me, for I'm wearing another name.

It's a safe bet that I never come out of that jam alive. But if I do, mebbe I'll come back from that hell there at the front with a name that won't hurt Jennie such a lot — and if that happens, then I may show up again. A few guys over here are doing things what makes people forget what they done before. But it's a long shot, and don't you place any bet on that.

I'm writing this letter to ask you to stand by Jennie.

Don't you tell her, or any one else.

You burn this letter.

Uncle George, sunk down on his chair, gazed at the letter for a long space. Then, breathing deeply, as one coming out of a dazing dream, he gazed hesitantly.

wonderingly, at the pair standing at the window with the baby. Presently they turned, and seeing that he apparently had finished his letter, they crossed to his side.

"You look strange, Uncle George," Jennie said anxiously. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear. Nothing at all."

"Any news in the letter that soldier brought?"

His eyes slipped down to the letter which he had half-crumpled on their approach, and they rested upon the two last sentences. "Don't tell her. You burn this letter." He wavered; there was an instant of dizzy indecision. Then his instinctive loyalty to a friend and that friend's wishes dominated him.

"Nothing in the letter at all, my dear," he said calmly. Almost with an air of indifference he tore the letter up and leaning forward dropped the fragments into the fire. They leaped into flames, and the next instant the letter from Black Jerry was merely a few leaves of black ash.

Jennie slipped down upon the arm of Uncle George's chair, Harry's arm about her shoulders. "Then if there's nothing important in your letter, Uncle George," she cried happily, holding out her baby, "just take a look at something that is important — Jerry! Don't you think Jerry is really a great little man?"

Uncle George looked down at the pink face for a moment — looked beyond it. Then he answered in a low, hushed voice — rather solemnly — almost reverently:

"Yes — I think Jerry is really a great man."

And Jennie, radiant at the praise, held her baby closely to her and joyously kissed him again.

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